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LETTERS • LETTERS • LETTERS • LETTERS • LETTERS

Dear HorrorHound,

I love your magazine. As a huge fan of horror, I love to absorb anything horror related. I stumbled upon your magazine about a year ago and have been a fan ever since. There are other horror mags out there, but you guys deliver the goods in spades. It seems that every inch of space is utilized to positive effect. You supply plenty of great images to go with the great articles, and I am always learning something new.



My sister, Chrystal, loves Halloween and going to all the October haunted events such as Spookywoods in Kersey Valley. She is a school teacher and Texas Chainsaw Massacre (the original) is one of her favorite movies. For her birthday this past July, I drew a bunch of horror characters and put them into a classroom environment. I thought it turned out pretty good and was wondering if you could print it. I will buy her an extra copy and hopefully get her hooked on you guys as well. Keep up the good work!

Christopher S. Overman (Brown Summit, NC)

I just wanted to say you're doing a fantastic job with your magazine and I look forward to future issues!

Speaking of future issues, is there a possibility of a *Night of the Living Dead* (1990) retrospective? This was my all-time favorite movie growing up and still is to this day. Having summer vacation days free when I was younger, with no parents home, brought a lot of opportunities from the local video store. I would get a variety of horror movies, but the one I would rent over and over was *Night of the Living Dead* '90. There is a realness to this movie - have it be the claustrophobic atmosphere, or the fear of being hunted by the living dead. I give thanks to Tom Savini for doing an exceptional job on making this film.

Bryan Hoover (Sterling Heights, MI)

Hey Bryan, a retrospective on this film is definitely in the cards. When? That's to be determined. - Editor

Ever since my brother showed me *HorrorHound* Magazine, and Rob Zombie's movies, I have been a fan of horror more than I was before. *HorrorHound* shows

previews of future movies, and conventions that interest me. My favorite horror character is Captain Spaulding, but my favorite actors are William Forsythe and Bill Moseley. *HorrorHound* is a classic magazine, and in my honest opinion, I believe everyone should read it. My family and my friends and I like to make these kind of films, as much as we like to watch them. Perhaps, maybe our future lies within making horror films that can influence as well as scare horror fans, old and new.

Travis McReynolds (Greenwich, NY)

My name is Chris Scott and I am commenting on Michael O'May's article on the FX artists of 1981 (*JH#23*). I noticed in his article that he spoke of where the passion of special effects is, where the talent is at, and I fully agree. I am going to be starting my own special effects business soon and I am also going to be going to Tom Savini's College of Special Effects. After reading the call for original special effects artists to step up to the plate and to use their imagination and their true talent instead of computer graphics, I felt that passion both as a horror fan but also as someone who respects the horror business. I feel that the horror field has lost something since around 2000. I have watched all of the great and original ideas of horror films such as *Friday* the 13th and other films that had true passion all around. I just wanted to say to *HorrorHound* Magazine and to Michael O'May, not to worry because this up and coming special effects expert is going to bring back the respect in the horror film genre and in the special effects field.

Michael Tavner

My name is Devon Walden and I am 13 years old and I drew this piece - I would die if I could at least get it in an actual *HorrorHound* Magazine. I was talking to Jeff Robinson about it and he really likes it in place, so let me know if you could get it in the fan art section of *HorrorHound*. If you can that would be absolutely awesome. Thanks!

Devon Walden



I love you guys and gals at *HorrorHound*! Up to this point the coolest gift you gave to me was the EC Comics-themed *Tales from the Crypt* retrospective issue. That show was my childhood. That and *The Simpsons*, with those good old *Treehouse of Horrors* episodes from the first 6 years, making Halloween all the more awesome (not that it needed a boost). You just knocked one out of the park with issue #129 though. 1981 was the year I was hatched and you nailed the best horror aspects of that year. I gotta admit not seeing those great flicks in the theaters - I was busy working the stained carrots and spitting-up on Mom and Dad, but I got around to watching the grabats and the morbo-grabats from my birth year eventually. Most of all *The Howling*.

♦ LETTERS ♦ LETTERS ♦

getting the retrospective in this issue, superb! I love Joe Dante and that is my favorite werewolf movie ever. I am a werewolf guy. Zombies have my heart (and brains) too, no doubt, but the furry beast that is me was born to be a wolf man. If this had fallen on issue #30, you would have nailed me entirely, but #29 is close enough. I'll just set myself back one year and pretend I have the authority to do that. Some day I hope to see an article in your fantastic mag all about me. What can I contribute to horror? I am too hairy to be a scream queen, but I go with Rob Zombie in saying as long as I can be the monster and get the babes I'll be good to go. Keep up the good work HorrorHound, I'll howl at the moon tonight in your honor!

Alan Dalby

I think that your Video Invasion series is one of the best monthly features I have ever seen in a sci-fi/horror genre magazine. I too have very fond memories of surfing my local video store shelves. Thank you for showcasing all of the boxes from these video companies. Seeing the cover art and the box titles again has jogged my memory and helped me in tracking down some of these lost treasures on DVD.

One note on the Video Invasion installment in issue #29. Your article neglected to mention another Embassy release: *The Soldier*. This action film directed by James Glendon starred Ken Wahl and Klaus Kinski. *The Soldier* is currently only available on Region 2 DVD.

Also, can you tell me in which issues the Video Invasion section has appeared? Thank you

James Russo

[Hey James, Matt Moore's Video Invasion: Remembering the VHS BOOM! series has appeared in every issue of HorrorHound since #12 - Editor]



I thought I would send you guys pics of my Texas Chainsaw Massacre Part 3 tattoo that was done last year. I'm now working on getting a Italian Gun Massacre tat done. Also, I enjoyed your magazine on the year of 1981

Tim Gross (Gross Movie Reviews)

I really enjoy your magazines. Will you be doing a retrospective article on House II? Thank You.

R.T. Myer

[Hey R.T., I am a personal fan of House II, so I would love to Jackie it someday in retrospective form. Unfortunately, last issue's Horror's Hallowed Grounds article (featuring House AND House II) was the only planned House article this year - Editor]

Send your letters, fan art and tattoos today!
E-mail us at mail@horrorhound.com.

THIS ISSUE:



Letter from the Editor:

Boy... did we receive a lot of letters regarding our decision to run the *Fright Night* remake on the cover of HorrorHound Magazine #30. (Highlighted by the fact that a variant Creepshow cover was available exclusively at comic book stores.) We learned something last issue... fans have a lot of animosity towards remakes these days. I can't blame our readers, however, it's not like Hollywood has been taking genre remakes very seriously as of late. Anyone who watched the 2008 remake of *Prom Night* can attest to that. What we at HorrorHound cannot agree with is the idea that every remake is bound to fail. Films such as *Dawn of the Dead* ('04) and *My Bloody Valentine* ('09) have proven that remakes can be good. And *Fright Night*, for all its comparable faults to the *Twilight* film series or the glut of TV fare (*Vampire Diaries*, *Being Human*, etc.) has a lot going for it - an amazing cast, an amazing starting point, and a shroud of secrecy. (How many people knew the on-screen vampires are monstrous creatures with massive fangs, wings and demonic faces? Or the fact that Dr. Who's own David Tennant is bound to take center stage and steal the show?) Regardless of the outcome, the HorrorHound staff saw enough to take a chance on this remake. But for those who don't feel like taking any more chances, we present, with this, our 31st issue, a special retro artwork cover (by Mark Maddox) giving full attention to 1982's *The Thing*. The iconic part of this movie being that the John Carpenter classic was in fact a remake, making this the second issue in a row featuring a remake honor title on its cover! Just make sure you give the latest installment in this film series a fair shake when it sees release on October 14th. It may surprise you!

~ Nathan Hanemann (Editor-in-Chief)

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SOME *THING* NEW!..... by Jessica Dwyer

Horror and science fiction are two of the world's most popular genres. When the two cross over into one another, we are often forced to look into a part of human nature we don't want to see, bringing to life some of the most horrific fears we as a species can think of. Loss of self, fear of infection, being a host for something that isn't human... these things are all part of the darker side of science fiction. Films like *Alien* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* provide great examples of these scenarios and are considered some of the best science fiction in the history of cinema. But one movie combined the horrific idea of all three of those fears and took them to the outer reaches of human nature.

John Carpenter's *The Thing* is perhaps one of the most dire and unforgiving sci-fi films of the last 50 years. The bleak landscape and even bleaker ending of *Outpost 31* and its crew provide a haunting look into man's fear and the worst case "what if" scenario you could imagine. To this day, the film's well-drawn characters and mind-shattering special effects are touted as some of the best in any genre. Rob Bottin and his FX team created monsters that had enough human left to be that much more terrifying, while Carpenter created a palpable sense of paranoia - his characters becoming unhinged as the unknown takes over. (Not bad for a remake.)

The film's ending left some unanswered questions, but for the director that was really the point. Were the two lone survivors infected? Were they going to freeze to death and die? That's really up to the audience to decide. A direct sequel to *The Thing* would mar the intent of Carpenter's conclusion which makes that a bad idea. However, there are still questions to be answered about what led to the events in the movie: What specifically happened in the Norwegian camp? Was it similar to what happened to the men in *Outpost 31*?

Answers are coming. *The Thing* (2011) is set in 1982, three days before the events in Carpenter's film. Where the original had no female cast members, the prequel introduces Dr. Kate Lloyd (Mary Elizabeth Winstead) who is asked to



come to an outpost in the Antarctic (populated by Norwegian scientists who speak limited English) to assist in the research of a recently unearthed extraterrestrial. However, it soon becomes apparent that the creature found in the ice is not dead, and the "thing" starts taking over each member of the unit one by one, amidst mounting distrust and confusion.

HorrorHound visited the set of the newest entry in the story of *The Thing*. Filmed in Toronto on massive soundstages and including shots that were filmed in areas used for the original movie, the filmmakers endured great pains to stay true to what Carpenter created. Director Matthijs van Heijningen, a massive fan of the original film, wanted to tell the story of what happened to the very first humans who came in contact with the creature. He also sought to do right by the original, keeping the two as close as possible in appearance and timeline.

In terms of production design, he has succeeded mightily. Walking around the set, one feels as though they just stepped into a time machine, as Heijningen has captured the look and tone of the original film. The recently released trailer gives us a taste of this as well as a nod to Ennio Morricone's memorable score. The sets are beautifully constructed, with high detail given to every little nuance. Modern isn't the word here: The typewriter, the electronics, everything is from 1962 or earlier. Fans will also see shades of the first film here, there and everywhere: the sense of cold, the dark shadowy interiors... and flamethrowers.

While on the set visit, we got to see the flamethrower in action (and by see, I mean nearly having our eyebrows burned away by the heat it gave off). Flame ball tests were being conducted next to us as we were talking to some of the cast. Needless to say, for a bit we were all focused on the pretty fire and the desire not to be scorched. But when the flames weren't going off, we got to discuss the production and learn what the cast and filmmakers had to say about traveling back in time to a place filled with ice, darkness, and a creature from your worst nightmares.

MARY ELIZABETH WINSTEAD VS. THE THING

HorrorHound: Tell us about what lends your character to the outpost.

Mary Elizabeth Winstead: She's asked to go along on this investigation but when she gets there she realizes pretty quickly that she's there to be a workhorse - not to think or speak but just to do her job. She's been brought in by this man Sander (Ulrich Thomsen) who knows what he's found. She's told basically that there's something really important and exciting, but that she can't be told what it is. She's hesitant at first, but in her position there's no way she can really turn down the opportunity, so she goes along with it. She assumes it's just going to be a regular find, a woolly mammoth or something like that. So she's quite surprised when she gets to Antarctica and finds that there's an alien in the ice. She's there doing the job she's supposed to be doing but not in the same way. She's overreacted as an equal. Sander thinks of me as someone who's good at her job, but being female I'm someone who can control, someone who won't take credit for all the cool find. He wants to take all the credit for it.

HH: You're one of the rare females to be a part of *The Thing* film series. How does that feel?

MW: It's pretty cool, I quite like being the only girl around here. I've been really respected and feel like one of the guys, which I don't often get to experience. I love it, I feel really honored to be the first female in this story.

HH: You've done various genre movie roles at this point. Are you a horror movie fan?

MW: I'm a movie fan in general. I don't really keep to one specific genre. I just love characters. That's really what I look for. I like interesting characters. And Kate's by far one of the most interesting characters I've done so far.

HH: How are you coming at this character in terms of balancing being strong but still believable?

MW: I was concerned that at first they were going to have me come into it and be like, "Action Start!" saying one line and things like that. But this is a very realistic film as far as the



War of the Worlds (1953): The small alien creatures depicted in *War of the Worlds* were actually men in costumes. The costumes were so small, the wearer had to be bent over in order to manipulate them.

JOEL EDGERTON – PILOTING THE THING

HorrorHound: How does your character become a part of this story?

Joel Edgerton: When we arrive there's a question as to why radio frequencies aren't working, which delays us a bit. Then we're employed to stick around to bring back whatever it is they found. When we realize what's been discovered, it's too late. The rest of the film is a mixture of figuring out the truth, complete paranoia and a scramble for survival.

HH: You said earlier your character is a lot like Kurt Russell's MacReady. How so?

JE: The script kind of distinguishes Carter as his own character. But he's definitely cut from the same heroic mold. Like when things go down, he acts in a relatively selfless way. Carter has a sense of protecting Mary Elizabeth Winstead's character. Not in a romantic sense, not any of that kind of bullshit, but definitely a protective quality. He sees a real sense of something in her, that she's alone in her own way. She's a great thinker and an interesting woman who's put upon by an older scientist who sets himself over her. There's a curious nature between her and I, we're intrigued by what's going on. She's cagey in that she doesn't want to show all her cards, while Ulrich's character Sander is cagey in a different way.

HH: What sort of background does Carter have?

JE: He's got a military background. If you look at the timing of the film, with us coming out of the Vietnam War, he's a helicopter pilot. ... It's really understated. You won't get any of these long speeches about how I was in the war. Because the Carpenter film exists, it allows us to be even more understated. I think it's cool that there's such great adherence to the design of the Norwegian base seen in the Carpenter film – it's spot on. There are all the story clues that you get, like the axe in the door, the guy who slit his throat, all of those things are there for the fans of the original. They made a concerted effort to incorporate those things in a way that's cool, but also serves our story rather than just trying to draw too long a bow and confusing the new audience.

performances go. Matthijs' radar for authenticity is so on, he wants all the characters to be real. So I'm playing a scientist, I'm not playing some bad-ass chick. I have to become strong throughout the film, to learn how to take care of myself and survive. I do find that inner strength, but I'm certainly not going into it like an action star.

HH: The parallels between your career and Kurt Russell's have been mentioned before, but I wanted to get your final word on that.

MEW: [Laughs] To be honest, it's total coincidence. But I do ...

HH: Are you stalking him?

MEW: I admit it! Yes! I'm obsessed! Actually, I really love him. He's wonderful. One of my favorite people I've ever worked with. And I'm totally fine with the fact I'm stalking him.

HH: Does he know you are doing this film?

MEW: You know, I don't know. I haven't spoken to him since the Grindhouse days but I hope he gives his blessing.

HH: How familiar were you with the original film?

MEW: Very familiar, it's one of my favorite



HH: We know where this all leads and that everyone is going to die (?). As an actor, what sense do you take from this?

JE: I love the word "dread" when it comes to a horror movie because dread is an experience the audience brings home as opposed to piles of blood or limbs being shredded. I believe that there is a similar goal between scenes of action or the anticipation of something happening that delivers a fright more than something jumping out of a door. But the assumption that there are no survivors in this movie – which might or might not be true – I don't know what that does. There are always rules when you go into a movie: "That girl's going to live," or "That guy's going to survive." Going into a movie where we're possibly throwing those rules out the window is kind of exciting. The more footholds you have going down into cinema, the safer you feel. I think we're trying to provide a far more frightening and dreadful experience as we take those footholds away. I think when you have a hero who never loses that guy grin, you never feel that sense of danger as much as when you have a hero who's willingly stepping into a dark room while at the same time wanting to turn on his heels and run in the other direction.

HH: The unwilling hero.

JE: I told Matthijs early on that I wanted Carter to be the kind of guy who's willing to help but not be terribly happy about it. I also like watching that on screen. "I'm gonna help you out but I'm kind of f---ing pissed off." Something in my nature is drawing me to walk down into fire with you. And there's something to be said about the kind of cowboys who'd be working in Antarctica generally. I'm not saying this about all of them, but certainly some of them are running from something or hiding from something. They don't have a hell of a lot to lose. So there's already a sense of a cloud hanging over them. Also when you're put into this type of situation, there's something in the back of your mind where you don't think you need that much of a will to live. Then when the storm hits, you find something in your nature that says otherwise. 🍷

movies. I love it. I have yet to see the 1951 version, but I think we're really focusing more on the Carpenter film, which I'm very happy with. I was both excited and worried when I got the script; you don't want to remake that film. It's really a perfect movie. But we're not doing that, it really is a prequel. "Companion piece" is the term they are using, and I think that's perfect for what it is.

HH: What did you do to help prepare for the role; did you create a back story for Kate that you could reference for yourself?

MEW: I did. I worked for a while with a paleontologist before we started shooting which was really cool. That was at the museum here [in Toronto]; so interesting to see how they work. It's really sort of a sterile world. It's got this kind of crazy, fly-on-the-wall atmosphere and they are all kooky and interesting people. So that helped in finding who Kate is and why she's passionate about it. She's not feminine about things like what she wears and wearing makeup. She's sort of androgynous in a way. Her focus in life is her job and science. I think finding a fossil in the ice, something like that is the utmost she could do. So coming here and taking a part of this, it's the beginning, it's extremely exciting. It's a dream fulfilled, but it turns terrifying. 🍷



ERIC CHRISTIAN OLSEN ON THE THING

HorrorHound: You are one of the few Americans in the movie. Can you give us some background on that and your character?

Eric Christian Olsen: I think the whole premise is that it's a Norwegian base camp and when they find something, they call in a colleague that has been doing this for a long time. This colleague is who my character works for, and he says he needs a specialist, someone who's good with extraction, someone who's a paleontologist. So I go get Kate to bring her on board because we have a relationship — we went to Columbia together. Now you have two Americans, and the chopper that flies us here has two more Americans on it. That's how you get them.

HH: What can you tell us about your character specifically?

ECO: [In prequel] where the audience knows where they're heading plot-wise, you have to find the most emotional connection you can to a character and identify with his journey. For me, it's a guy in his late 20s and he's looking for fame and fortune in this world. He believes that Sanders will win the Nobel Prize, and he kind of attaches himself to that. I think that when my character takes this journey he does it from a very selfish standpoint. What's in it for him and what he's going to get out of it? I think he's a pretty easy character to identify with because in the beginning of that arc, he's a little naive about what he's getting into. But by the end of act two, all the shit hits the fan, and he falls apart. When we talked about this originally ... it's sort of *Lord of the Flies* meets *Aliens*. Human behavior



kicks in and it's the art of self-preservation — what you will do to preserve the survival of one's self. And that's where I'm at right now in the end of act two: "Who do I ally myself with that's going to keep me alive?"

HH: Were you a fan of the original?

ECO: I was. When I first heard they were doing the film, I thought, "How do you do that?" Then I heard it wasn't a sequel, it's a prequel, and you've got these two seamless stories. At the beginning of John Carpenter's, you have these two Norwegians in a helicopter trying to blow up a dog. Shooting out the window, and you've got no fuck-

ing clue what's going on. The fact that our story dovetails right into that lends itself to an opportunity: all you know is that one guy slit his throat and there are bodies everywhere. There's a whole story to be told to get to that ending.

HH: Do you think that *The Thing* knows what it's doing when it extracts people in these sceneries?

ECO: Oh, it's self-aware. The way that I am playing this is that the infected probably know they are infected because they are doing what *The Thing* wants. But those of us who aren't infected don't know we aren't infected. You are playing the fear of those who are infected, but you are also playing the fear of "Am I infected?" So the psychological games begin, you are thinking, "I'm obviously not it." Then she starts the test and you think, "Why would I be allowed to be one of the last if I'm not it?" Because you still don't know. I think that adds a layer of unthinkable terror to the whole thing. 📌

ADEWALE AKINNUOYE-AGBAJE - LOST TO THE THING

HorrorHound: What is your character's history with Carter?

Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje: We've fought together in Vietnam. We've been through some life-threatening situations together and pulled each other through by the skin of our teeth. It's kind of what's bonded us. I think also when we were building backstories for the characters — and this is really just theory for us to help get us to where we are — we had the idea that we both had experienced losses, our families. ... That sort of bonded us over the color boundaries. Now we're tight buddies and we formed a business. You know, when the vets came home, they felt displaced, living on the edge of society. I was his wing man back in Nam, so we started a flight company and decided to go make some bucks. I wanted to go to Southern California dumping water on fires which you'll hear references to this throughout the movie. I'm the only one without a beard ... this fan ... I was thinking I was going to be in Southern California and I wound up in the Antarctic. But seriously it was just one of our dreams, and this was where we could go to make some dough. Early on, there were a lot of chances, but it's kind of skinny pickings right now. Throughout the movie you'll hear me say, "Southern California is pretty nice right now." That's the background. It's kind of loose but we make it up as we go along.

HH: The friendship between these characters sounds strong. But the whole power of *The Thing* is that you don't know the person any longer. You don't really know them.

AAA: Well, like the scene we're shooting right now, it's a poignant moment in the movie. You see movies all the time where someone gets shot and they can get

up and take a few more. But here, the director is very particular. Only one person is shooting here, it's in self-defense, and the realization that it's a human has a lot of impact not only on the shooter but all of us around him. It's a very interesting question because there's a moment in the movie where Carter and I get in the chopper and get off base. But Carter decides that he wants to go back, and there's a moment, a beat that I insisted on in the script. It's just a word, but I say, "I'm trusting you on this one." To me, that goes back to all those near-death, life-threatening moments. You look at your buddy, you know this is a do-or-die situation and you're going to roll with him because you've done it. This is one of those moments where you felt like you knew somebody but you really don't. This is what this movie's all about, an exploration of the human psyche. The individual, you know, trust. It's not just horror — it's more of a thriller because of the suspense. You know, you're looking and thinking, "Is it him?" It could be Carter, you know. When we come back, there are moments it's very evident that Carter or I could be one of the Things. I know when I turn back that we're gonna die. But that's my buddy and there's nothing else I can do. It's one of those life-altering decisions.

HH: There are some heavy subjects covered in this film, and it sounds specifically like this scene manages to capture a lot of them.

AAA: This is the only gunshot fired in the whole movie. And it kills a human being. Mathis was really insistent on the value of life. He wanted to convey that in the movie. Everyone, including me, says, "Oh my god, what the fuck have I done?" Even though it was in self-defense, even though I did this in Nam, I think this is a really heavy scene. 📌

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DIRECTING THE THING WITH MATTHIJS VAN HEIJNINGEN

HorrorHound: The set design on this is amazing. How did you go about recreating these?

Matthijs van Heijningen: We photographed everything. We are building radio equipment that's similar to what is in the Carpenter movie. We tried to find some set designs but they were all gone. So we just watched it over and over and did it by eye, to sort of copy it.

HH: That being said, this is a prequel to something that ends right when the new film begins. We know what happens to most of these characters ... they don't make it. How do you approach this to make something like that relevant?

MH: Well, we had the lead up of this Norwegian who winds up in the American camp. He became sort of the big character in our movie because he starts the Carpenter movie and we end our movie with him. So we learn how he works. It is basically his dog that he's chasing in this movie; it's his dog that transforms and that he's trying to kill. I had to fight really hard to have real Norwegians in this movie; it was a real uphill battle. At first it was 12 Norwegians and Universal was like, "No. We need some Americans." A lot of Norwegian is spoken in this movie which really enhances this movie. Not subtitled, which I think is super cool.

HH: How does the timeframe work in this film? Is the frame work similar to the original?

MH: Well, it runs over the course of three days. In the John Carpenter picture, they talk about the 12 Norwegians, but we changed it a little where there are nine Norwegians and three Americans. We can't follow all of those characters, so if someone runs off and we don't see them for a few hours, then they could have been changed. The structure is sort of *Alien*-like, you know, because it's sort of a mix. When we started constructing this film, we sort of took all of the detective plots and tried constructing them into the movie. But what I liked about *Alien* was how believable the characters are. How they are sort of like truck drivers in space. Suspense comes when they are sitting around, trying to figure out what the creature is really there for. And they realize it isn't there to just kill everyone in the camp but to take over the world. The moment when they figure that out, that they can't leave ... they start disabling every form of transport. When the guys come back from disabling the vehicles and everyone realizes what they are doing, nobody trusts anybody anymore.

HH: The special effects from the original film are some of the most groundbreaking of all time. How are the effects being handled in this film?

MH: The goal is to use as many practical effects as possible. I love actors. My experience as a commercial



director is the moment you put a green tennis ball in front of them. ... I'll give you an example: I tell everyone in this room that there is a tiger in the room. I put a green tennis ball in front of an actor and say that's a tiger, they are going to do all sorts of weird stuff. But if I had a real monster in the room they would act completely different. So we have people bursting out and becoming the creature. We have as much practical as possible, and enhance it in a digital way. Because I'm as interested in the reactions of those people as the monsters.

HH: Will the original film's music be used in your film at all?

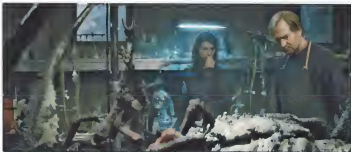
MH: I think my idea while we are shooting is to reuse it. Like with *The Godfather Part II*, where the themes stay the same but you sort of recompose them a little. It shouldn't feel competitive though. It's beautiful music; it's not just horror music. It has a real beautiful quality.

HH: What sort of actors were you looking for when compiling this cast?

MH: It was led by the story. What I liked about the Howard Hawks movie is learning just how this happened and that it's caused by a human mistake. Like a *Grook* tragedy, human weakness is to blame and not just a monster. In *Alien*, the biggest moment happens when Ripley says, "We shouldn't let him in," and Ash (a robot, but programmed by humans) opens the door. [That informed] the casting of Ullrich, the sort of driving-by-hubs professor who just wants to drill into this creature to take a sample ... These were characters that were really molded, so I was looking for actors who really fit those characters. I spoke to real scientists and they basically said they fuck up. When they find something, a fossil or something, they just want to drill into it. They ruin stuff instead of waiting for two months to get back home. The whole idea is they find it, but instead of just shipping it, their impatience costs them everything. In the casting of Joel as the Americans, I wanted to do a tribute to MacReady with the casting of Joel as a pilot. But it all centers on Kale. I thought when we were doing the movie that if we try to copy Kurt Russell or if it seems like, "Oh, you want another MacReady ..." Well, you're going to lose it. But my admiration for *Alien* and the Ripley character came into play. So it was Joel and Mary very quickly, and then sort of casting around them.

HH: So what sort of other elements from the original are seen in this?

MH: Well, the one which is the biggest challenge is when MacReady and the others arrive at the Norwegian outpost, they find this sort of creature (which they bring back to the American camp), this character with two faces. Basically that [object] is a pivotal thing in our movie, how that creature comes to be and who those characters are. ♦

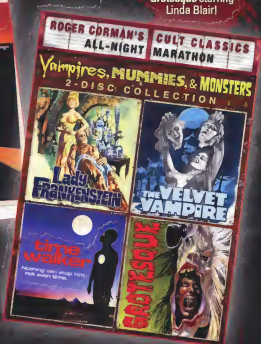


Phantom from Space (1953). This title follows a crashed alien being who, to evade Earth-bound captors, takes off his space suit which allows him to turn invisible. ...

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INDIE SPOTLIGHT IN REVIEW

• by Jason Hignite



D4

There needs to be a new subgenre for horror films... something like "Paramilitary." This would cover films such as the *Resident Evil* series, *Predator* and *Dog Soldiers*. Yeah... I know... *Predator* is an alien movie and *Dog Soldiers* is about werewolves... there is a lot of overlap, and subgenres exist for two reasons one, purpose of discussion, and two, video rental organization... but, I digress.

D4 fits well with the previously mentioned films. Damon Dickerson wrote, produced, directed and starred in this film (what?), and it was his first feature. Probably the most interesting fact is that his inspiration for the story came from his real-life experience in dealing with his own son's epilepsy in the movie, the government is performing medical experiments on epileptic patients in an abandoned military facility called D4, deep in the Appalachian Mountains. When the son of a billionaire ends up in D4, a crack team of former military special forces is hired to break into the facility and rescue the son. *Sidestory*: a Vietnam vet's grandson ends up in D4 as well, and the vet takes it upon himself to get his grandson out. The vet and the mercenaries end up meeting inside the perimeter fence just in time to encounter the deep, dark, large, secret of the facility. Pardon the pun... D4 is well-pseudo-grade school.

We'll written, with superb acting (the mercenaries definitely have the swagger of former military personnel), plus this "Paramilitary" film is also a creature feature... most abandoned military installations hide some kind of creature, right? Though this one is not necessarily unique, it is presented in a fresh way. This is not meant to be a spoiler... so I will stop there. The point being—you definitely need to check out D4 on your own.



The Sleeper

The attempts to create a retro-style horror film seem to be coming more frequently; however, the successful effort is still a rarity. Ty West's *House of the Devil* set the bar for throw-back horror, and since then, horror fans have been hungry for that old-school creep and gore.

But what Ty West did for the '70s, Justin Russell, director of *The Sleeper*, has done for the '80s. *The Sleeper* has elements of all things early-'80s slasher horror. The close-up screams, slow-motion kills and the over-the-top characters, took me back to 1983... and it was good! '80s slasher films have always been my ultimate favorite, Justin Russell mentioned in a recent interview, "I always set out to make films that I would want to see and I feel like no one has made a fun, '80s-style slasher in years." Russell adds, "There are a lot of great slasher films that have come out in the past five to 10 years, but they don't capture the essence that made the '80s slashers what they were. With *The Sleeper*, I wanted to capture that feeling that was lost after 1985."

The story begins when the girls of Alpha Gamma Theta decide to take new pledges, little do they know that a killer is stalking each girl. One by one, the killer claims his prey and hides the bodies. When two of the girls have gone missing, the police intervene. But, could it be too late for the rest?

CLASSIC '80s slasher! *The Sleeper* does a great job with wardrobe, music, SFX, camera angles and campy moments of humor. It fails a bit short with '80s vehicular, but that's just no being picky. Also, Alpha Gamma Theta could have used a few more sisters wandering around the house in the beginning, it would have sold the idea of an active sorority house, but don't let any of this detract you—this is a must-see for all '80s slasher fans.



Death Stop Holocaust

Two young women head for a vacation getaway to a remote lake town... and it all goes downhill from there. The residents of this small hamlet are hiding a deadly secret of carnage and torture. These people do not like outsiders, and they are determined that no one will live to tell their story.

Death Stop Holocaust is a roller-coaster ride of terror. Even before the madness begins, dreams haunt one of the girls... serving as premonitions of the horrors to come. Once on "the island" (not really an island, but... well... they explain it in the movie), the insanity begins with an interlude in a creepy diner with a crazed tilligator (very *Jaspers Creepers*), leading to the lonely house in the dark woods, where the movie has a feel of *The Strangers*. But, where *The Strangers* would ramp up then let you back down, *Death Stop Holocaust* peaks and never lets you go. "The intensity of the film can be credited to Lisa Krensky who was able to jump into her psychotic state in an instant and still listen to my direction," says the director, Justin Russell (who also directed *The Sleeper*; at left). "With her ongoing title to no motivation to get into character, I was able to get this film shot on a very tight schedule with no budget or crew. Shooting *Death Stop Holocaust* was almost like going through boot camp. With a crew of four on a good day, it was an incredibly difficult shoot."

What makes *Death Stop Holocaust* the most interesting—there are no cloyous amounts of blood or gore in fact, SFX is used very sparingly. This does two things for the film: first, when it is used, it makes an impact, second, it puts more of the terror in your mind rather than in front of your eyes. *Death Stop Holocaust* has already been picked up by Media Blasters.



Dead Cert

The latest vampires-un-amok film to come out of the UK—*Dead Cert*—is one of the most subtle films to feature fanged fiends, a strip club, underground fight clubs and gangs. In fact, outside of the movie's poster art and tagline—you could conceivably go 40 minutes into this film without knowing half of the cast consists of vampires.

This ambitious project comes from virtual-newbie director, Steven Lawson, and boasts an impressive cast of Brits—including Craig Fairbrass (*The Bank Job*), Dexter Fletcher (*Kick-Ass*) and Jason Flemyng (*Snatch*). The only real problem going into this movie is the massive display of cockney accents. Within five minutes, this reviewer was desperately hunting down the subtitle option (sadly, the screener copy I had for review contained no such feature). Accents aside—this film is pretty straight-forward. A small gang of locals lose their bar to another gang of... vampires. When the locals demand their bar back, the revelation of their dark opposition's origins comes too late and a standoff ensues.

One review for the film likened it to *From Dusk Till Dawn* meets *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*—the former is more accurate; however, don't go into this film expecting fantastic gore, monster effects or even a fulfilling finale (the holy-water soaked ending is a bit lackluster). What you will find is another decent example of British crime thrillers—that happens to boast vampires. Fang fans may also want to check out recent releases *Suck and Vampire Killers* (aka: *Lesbian Vampire Killers*)—they are in the same vein as *Dead Cert* (pun totally intended), but slightly more appealing for those wishing for more gore, more special effects and much more in-your-face vampire action.

by Nathan Hanemann

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Defend Your Turf: **ATTACK OF THE BLOCK**

• by Jessica Dwyer

If you are a horror fan and haven't been hiding under a rock over the last few years, you've probably heard of a little film called *Shaun of the Dead*. Edgar Wright and his crew introduced a blend of horror and comedy not seen since the days of *Evil Dead*, followed up in 2007 by another genre homage, the action/top movie (with a healthy helping of gore) comedy, *Hot Fuzz*. Since, stars Simon Pegg and Nick Frost and director Wright have all become cult heroes - Wright entered the world of comic-book movies with *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World*, Frost starred in comedies like *Kinky Boots* and *Private Practice*, and Pegg saved the world (and the universe) in films like *Mission: Impossible II* and *Star Trek*. Even the circle of friends surrounding this trio are showing signs of true talent - including constant collaborator Joe Cornish. When Cornish brought his hybrid science-fiction/horror/comedy script to Wright and partner Nina Park at Big Talk Productions, the decision was made to produce the movie.

Attack the Block, Cornish's directorial debut, is quickly becoming one of 2011's sleeper hits, unfolding the story of an alien landing in a South London public housing neighborhood. The plot centers on a gang of young thugs who cross paths with the invaders ... with bloody results. The locals, including the kids and a host of characters such as drug dealer Ron (Nick Frost) and female nurse Sam (Jodie Whittaker), are left to defend their turf against the creatures using whatever methods they can. The large, fanged and clawed beasts resemble radiation-dosed bears mixed with *Critters'* extolensential furballs - in other words, not something you'd want to run into.

The kids are the true stars of the film, inhabiting realistic characters within a truly unreal situation. Most of the youngsters are unknowns, with *Attack the Block* being their first feature film. Charming and talented star John Boyega, who plays the gang's leader, Moses, says Cornish let the kids be kids. "Joe gave us a lot of responsibility in tweaking the script during rehearsals to make it sound more authentic, like it would if you went to South London," John told *HorrorHound*, "while at the same time giving it more of a heightened sci-fi feel. Kids our age when they get scared say the dumbest stuff. It's too much madness," or "I feel like going home, locking the door, and playing FIFA [online soccer]." We had a lot of freedom. The script is the closest in terms of language to an urban script I've ever read."

Boyega and his co-stars get into some extreme situations thanks to the alien menace, with heroics and action equal parts in his character's transition from wannabe thug to neighborhood savior. Boyega jokingly admits, "My mom sees me in a different light now. She thinks I'm an action super hero. Now if she hears some sort of creak in the kitchen, she's like, 'John, you get it. Do something like you did in the film.' She was very scared when she watched it; she was like this [covering his eyes]: 'My son! My son!'"

If you're doing your first genre flick, you can't pick a better name than *Edgar Wright* to be behind your movie. We asked John Boyega how was it to work with him on a film like this: "Edgar was fantastic!" John exclaims, "Even though we didn't see him much when we were first on set, we knew very much what he was doing. We knew how his actions were affecting the film, because obviously Joe and Edgar have been friends for a long time, and Joe is inspired by Edgar's work. Edgar inspired *Attack the Block* to be the best it could be in its own ilk away from *Hot Fuzz* and *Shaun of the Dead*, to help Joe get to a good place where he could say, 'I made my own movie and it's a Joe Cornish movie.'"

Cornish has nothing but praise for his cast in equal measure: "We have 11 kids in this

movie that were between the ages of 10 and 17 when we shot," he explains, "and I had a huge amount of talent to choose from."

"None of our kids had any on-camera experience before. I was just blown away by their talent and passion and enthusiasm and sense of humor. We wound up involving them with the costume decisions. I wrote the last two drafts of the script with their collaboration. I think I would find it odd to make a film with actors with loads of experience. Just to be around that level of young energy - the whole crew, the whole production fed off that enthusiasm. They were very excited to be in a film where they could ride BMXs and brandish samurai swords and cut the heads off aliens. I'm incredibly proud of them."

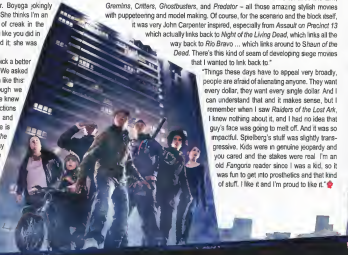
The film has done well in the UK and already has a cult following overseas. Here in the States, the movie opened with a small release in seven cities. Much like *Paranormal Activity*, online sites asking for the public to demand the film be released in their city sparked a growing release schedule.

"I want as many people to see the movie as possible," says Cornish, "and if the movie is a success it will be an honest success. It doesn't have a huge marketing machine behind it. People talk about hype, but hype for me is a marketing machine. All we've done is show the film. Any sort of buzz is genuine and honest enthusiasm for it. In a way this release is kind of old school, much like the film is old school. This is the way movies used to be released, seven cities and after a few weeks they would expand. If people dig it, they should spread the word [for others] to come and see it."

Attack the Block was definitely inspired by some classic films, namely John Carpenter's work, which comes through in the soundtrack and score by Basement Jaxx. "That was the pitch," Cornish explains, "We wanted to combine the Hollywood sort of fantasy feel of John Williams with that gritty low-fi electronic spirit of John Carpenter. But I also wanted a proper score. I didn't want to cover this with pop hits or urban tracks. I wanted the music to follow the shape of the action, to be elastic. One of the things we noticed about Carpenter is he never uses a snare drum. He always uses a high hat or a bass drum, but he'll never have a finger-clicking beat. So things never turn to a pop promo, it always stays with the narrative."

For those worrying if the film delivers on the red stuff, don't worry: Cornish is a horror fan. "I just love a bit of splatter," says Cornish, "And this goes back to those '80s movies I like. There are a lot of influences here. Creature features like *E.T.*, *Gremlins*, *Critters*, *Ghostbusters*, and *Predator* - all those amazing stylish movies with puppeteering and model making. Of course, for the scenario and the block itself, it was very John Carpenter inspired, especially from *Assault on Precinct 13* which actually links back to *Night of the Living Dead*, which links all the way back to *Rio Bravo* ... which links around to *Shaun of the Dead*. There's this kind of seam of developing genre movies that I wanted to link back to."

"Things these days have to appeal very broadly, people are afraid of alienating anyone. They want every dollar, they want every single dollar. And I can understand that and it makes sense, but I remember when I saw *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, I knew nothing about it, and I had no idea that guy's face was going to melt off. And it was so impactful. Spielberg's stuff was slightly transgressive. Kids were in genuine jeopardy and you cared and the stakes were real. I'm an old Fangone reader since I was a kid, so it was fun to get into prosthetics and that kind of stuff. I like it and I'm proud to like it."



INTRODUCING, THE LIVING Corpse • by Eric Newell



Coming next year, the worlds of comic books, 3-D films and zombies collide like never before – with the big-screen adaptation of *The Living Corpse*, based on the comic book series from Dynamite Entertainment. We recently caught up with the co-creators of the comic, Buzz Haseen and Ken Haeser, as well as the film's director, to chat about the project and the unique challenges an undertaking like this presents.

HorrorHound: How would you describe the comic for the uninitiated?

Buzz Haseen (co-creator of the comic): It's a straight-up dark hero story where the living corpse, a sentient zombie with a conscious, goes through his undead existence seeking answers to why he still lives – all the while being guided by a fallen angel to help keep evil at bay and the human world safe from monsters. I like to think of it as *Hellboy* meets *The Tick*. [He's a] horror hero with a sarcastic sense of humor.

Ken Haeser (co-creator of the comic): *The Living Corpse* is a zombie comic that's not a zombie comic. The main character of the comic, *The Living Corpse*, is a zombie but he is a good guy – about as good as a pissed-off, walking dead, who needs to eat human brains to live, can be. It's his job to keep the balance between the human world and the other worlds that lie in the shadows.

HN: What are the story's biggest influences?

KH: Story-wise we are influenced by stuff with dark humor peppered throughout, movies like *Army of Darkness*, *Dead Alive*, *Re-Animator*, *Fright Night* and *Return of the Living Dead* – stuff that doesn't take itself too seriously. Art-wise, we are very influenced by the Saturday morning cartoons we grew up with and the classic comic book artists like Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and anyone who does anything their way.

HN: How did this indie comic end up being developed into a 3-D feature film?

BN: I discovered Justin [the film's director/producer] through an ad he had posted online about wanting to make a zombie movie based on a comic where the zombie was the central character in the story. We had just that, so I contacted him about the possibility of checking our work out on our site (corpsecomic.com) and things just took off from there: he loved what we had and Shoreline [Entertainment] was a reputable and well-established company, so it really was an easy decision for K&N and I to option the film immediately.

HN: How faithful will the film be to the comics?

Justin Paul Ritter (Director): The movie is somewhat unique from the comic series in the sense that I really wanted to explore a gap that appeared between the first and second issues. I was left with some big questions about how our hero transitioned from his first night as an undead being which is covered by issue #1 to the hard-edged tough-guy that we see in all the subsequent issues.

HN: The decision to make this a 3-D feature seems really interesting consider-

ing it's a smaller indie project. How did that come about?

JPR: As a director, I loved the idea of having that extra dimension to play with. Pushing the camera and trying to get as creative as possible within the limitations of a given production is always a very high priority for me. The initial decision to make "Corpse" as an animated film had already opened up so many possibilities beyond anything I'd been able to do with live action, and I sort of found myself in a creative frenzy, dreaming bigger and bigger and supercharging my imagination – which naturally led to exploring what might be possible by adding stereoscopic tools to the workflow.

HN: Cost-wise, how did you make it feasible for such a small property?

JPR: This is like asking your grandmother to give up her secret recipes! But I'll do my best to dance around this one.

Basically, during the pre-production stages there were several months of research and development put into creating a specific workflow and tool set that would allow us to increase daily productivity beyond what most people would expect even in a low-budget world; some of what we used was off the shelf, some was hodge-podged together from various existing tools repurposed in unusual ways, and some things were created from scratch specifically to fit the needs of our production.

HN: Once the feature is completed, what will be the main method of distribution? Since 3-D TVs don't have a huge market penetration at the moment, will you try to arrange a small theatrical run?

JPR: Everybody knows how hard it is to get a movie into a theatrical release, but at the same time, I think every filmmaker dreams about seeing their movie up on a big screen. One of the unique things about Corpse has been the awareness from the start that the movie isn't based on "difficult material"; I've been involved in so many inde-

pendent films in one position or another, and they are almost always dealing with very deep themes, emotional issues, philosophical agendas, etc. As a result, even the most beautiful indie film can get lost in "the message" and rarely have the clout for grabbing a large enough audience to warrant a big-screen run. But with Corpse, we're doing something different; it definitely has a really strong indie sensibility, but also it has a colorful and swelling vibe to the whole thing which just might let it grow outside the indie barrier and reach a large-scale audience. I mean, seriously, who doesn't want to see a kick-ass 3-D animated fantasy/sci-fi/horror movie filled with zombies, mad scientists, underworld creatures, foot chases, shoot outs, fist fights and on and on?

Producers inform us that the film will be finished in August, at which time it will be shipped to distributors. Stay tuned to HorrorHound.com for updates. ♦



HORROR HOUND WEEKEND

CINCINNATI

NOVEMBER 12-14, 2010

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Deluxe Edition Home Video

As pointed out in just about every other issue of *HorrorHound Magazine* – deluxe-edition home video releases are simply the best! Terminator DVDs packed in an Endo-Skeleton head, steelcases and prop replicas or statues of any kind packaged with a new edition of our favorite movies help considerably renew interest in titles and the limited collector market that is home video! This issue, we are happy to showcase two “killer” DVD/Blu-ray releases that we know every genre fan will be excited about.

Jurassic Park

Some of the greatest movies of all time are still awaiting their Blu-ray debuts, and Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* is one of them. Well, on October 20th, fans of the “JP” film series can rejoice as Universal will issue a three-film box set featuring new bonus materials made exclusively for this package! New features include interviews with the filmmakers and cast documenting the making of all three films. Best yet? An exclusive edition will be released with a resin statue of the T-Rex busting through the infamous *Jurassic Park* entrance gate!



Friday the 13th
Paramount Home Video are reissuing the seven original Friday the 13th installments in their previously released special-edition formats – now available together in this boxed set. All original discs will be included as well as two pair of 3-D glasses for viewing “Friday 3D.” The only new perk to this buy? A replica Friday the 13th Jason Voorhees mask!

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Synapse Horror Goes Blu

While the Blu-ray market isn't exactly new for the fan-fave home video distributor Synapse Films, their end-of-2011 offerings will definitely make them favorites within the horror aisles. Earlier in the year Synapse had premiered their first BD titles, *Embodyment of Evil*, *The Dawn that Dripped*, *Blood and Vampire*, and *Circus* (released in December of 2010). Each title proved one thing... that Synapse was taking this new high-def medium seriously, as evidenced by the quality video transfers, sound and bonus materials. It is their most recent title announcements, however, that are finally showing the reach of the company's ability to please horror fans. Set to come out on September 13th



of this year will be an unrated director's cut of *The Exterminator* (presented with both DVD and BD versions of the film). On October 26th, Synapse will jump into cult cinema gold with their release of *Maniac Cop*. Extras for this title include a “Maniac Cop Memories” featurette, interviews with Tom Atkins, Danny Hicks, a motion still gallery, additional Japanese

TV scenes, a theatrical trailer and TV spots. Lastly, on November 22nd Synapse will release a high-def edition of Frank Henenlotter's *Frankenhooker*. Several other titles are being prepped for upcoming BD release

(including *Countess Dracula*, *Twins of Evil* and *Infruder*). Look for information on these titles in future issues of *HorrorHound Magazine*!

100 QUESTIONS WITH Tom Savini

In every issue of *HorrorHound* we take the time to track down a film director within the world of horror to ask a series of 10 seemingly random questions. Whether revolving around said director's body of work, their latest projects, or simply what kind of cereal they had for breakfast – no question is too daring (or silly) to ask! In the past we have been honored to have such directors as John Carpenter, Tobe Hooper, George Romero and Rob Zombie take part in this bi-monthly obsession. This issue we managed to steal a few minutes away from FX legend and director – Tom Savini. While Tom is most well known for his FX work on *Friday the 13th* and *Creepshow*, he also directed the 1990 remake of *Night of the Living Dead*! Enjoy as we delve into 10 Random Questions with Tom Savini:

HorrorHound: Who's your all-time favorite comedian?

Tom Savini: Bobby Slayton.

HH: You directed the remake of *Night of the Living Dead* – what other flick would you chomp at the bit to re-imagine?

TS: *The Most Dangerous Game*, or *Trapeze*.

HH: Vinyl, compact discs, or MP3s?

TS: Vinyl AND MP3s!

HH: If Satan had a last name, what would it be?

TS: Bin Laden.

HH: What is the most bizarre fortune cookie fortune you can remember receiving?

TS: One that said I would die in a plane crash. It was a gag made by “friends.”

HH: You can only watch two movies for the rest of your life, both starring Tom Hanks – which two would you pick?

TS: *Forrest Gump* and *Castaway*.

HH: Who is your favorite pro wrestler?

TS: Triple H.

HH: What is the oddest home good you've ever purchased?

TS: Pig intestines.

HH: Have you ever contemplated writing a memoir?

TS: I am writing my biography. It's called *A Flesh Bag Speaks Air*.

HH: Would you ever consider being a contestant on *Dancing with the Stars*?

TS: No, but if I did, I would win. I started out as a trained dancer – I was the lead in many musicals. I would kick their asses!





The Blood Trilogy
(Image Entertainment)
Available: Sept 27th
Details: Color Me Blood Red, Blood Feast and Two Thousand Maniacs... all on one self! As if you need any more reason to visit your local video store on September 27th... no extras were revealed as of press time
Format: Blu-ray



Chromeskull: Last to Rest 2
(Image Ent.)
Available: Sept 29th
Details: Robert Hall's DTV feature Chromeskull: Last to Rest 2 hits both DVD and Blu-ray this September and will include an audio commentary, behind-the-scenes footage, deleted scenes, bloopers and a trailer
Format: DVD/Blu-ray



Dead Alive
(Lionsgate)
Available: Oct 4th
Details: Peter Jackson has been quoted that he will get around to producing a "special edition" of *Dead Alive* when he has the time. Since that doesn't seem to be anytime soon, here's a bare-bone high-def issue of his film
Format: Blu-ray



Halloween II
(Universal Home Ent.)
Available: Sept 13th
Details: Celebrating the 30th anniversary of the original *Halloween* sequel, one of the most exciting aspects of this disc is the alternate ending and the Terror in the Aulds documentary (never before available on home video)
Format: Blu-ray



The Hills Have Eyes
(Image Entertainment)
Available: Sept 6th
Details: The Wes Craven original *Hills Have Eyes* finally hits BD this September thanks to Image Entertainment... unfortunately, this classic title is not scheduled to include any additional bonus materials
Format: DVD/Blu-ray



House by the Cemetery
(Blue Underground)
Available: Sept 27th
Details: *Blue Underground* will unveil the US premiere of *House by the Cemetery* on BD this September. The only detail about this upcoming release is that it will include the uncut BD (previously available on DVD from Anchor Bay)
Format: DVD/Blu-ray



Island of Lost Souls
(Orion)
Available: Oct 25th
Details: Possibly the most wanted DVD ever, 1932's *Island of Lost Souls* hits both DVD and BD this October thanks to Orion and comes with a number of bonus features (including a commentary, interviews and more)
Format: DVD/Blu-ray



Mimic
(Lionsgate)
Available: Sept 27th
Details: The long-awaited director's cut of Guillermo del Toro's 1997 film *Mimic*. Really hits home value! It will include seven minutes of restored footage, featurettes, new interviews, deleted scenes, outtakes and more!
Format: Blu-ray



A Nightmare on Elm Street 2 & 3
(Warner)
Available: Sept 27th
Details: Warner Bros. Home Video are releasing a number of franchise-based two-packs this fall, including the "Elm Street" sequels *Freddy's Revenge* and *Dream Warriors*. No bonus material will be included with this set
Format: Blu-ray



Rare Exports
(Cosmoscope Pictures)
Available: Oct 25th
Details: The buzz-worthy *Rare Exports*. A Christmas tale hits DVD and BD this October packed with extras, such as two short films, a making of, a featurette and a copy of Santa Claus Conquers the Martians (BD only)
Format: DVD/Blu-ray



Red State
(Lionsgate)
Available: Oct 18th
Details: Kevin Smith's first "stab" at horror hits DVD and BD this October, and in usual fashion, includes lots of Smith-headed extras, including a commentary, deleted scenes (both commentary and a poster gallery)
Format: DVD/Blu-ray



Scream 4
(Warner Bros. Company)
Available: Oct 4th
Details: The fourth installment in Wes Craven's *Scream* series hits DVD and BD on October 4th and comes with a making-of featurette, an alternate ending, an extended ending, both deleted and extended scenes as well as a gag reel
Format: DVD/Blu-ray



A Serbian Film
(Magnet Pictures)
Available: Oct 25th
Details: A man puts his life, as well as his family's lives, in danger when he signs up as the star of a new "groundbreaking" porn film... if you dare pick this title up on DVD and Blu-ray, it will be available in a limited-edition uncut format
Format: DVD/Blu-ray



Troll Hunter
(Magnet)
Available: Now Available
Details: The much-trailed about Norwegian feature film, *Troll Hunter*, is now available via Magnet! Magnet Home Video and includes a making-of featurette, deleted scenes, a HD-Net special on the film and the original international trailer
Format: DVD/Blu-ray



Zombie
(Blue Underground)
Available: Oct 25th
Details: *Zombie* (or *Zambi 2* for its horror needs) comes out via *Blue Underground* on October 25th packed with extras such as a new introduction, audio commentary, interview with Guillermo del Toro? multiple featurettes and trailers
Format: Blu-ray

DVD & Blu-ray Release Schedule

Weekly-week schedule of all upcoming DVD and Blu-ray titles

September 6, 2011
Crash Rock TV Series (DVD)
Halloween: Hellraiser (BD)
Hills Have Eyes, The (BD)
Horrible Way to Die, A (DVD/BD)
Scary Movie (BD)

September 13, 2011
Bad Dreams/Violent Hours (DVD)
Estimoteur, The (BD)
Enginesmen, The (BD)
Halloween II (BD)
Haunting of the Season (DVD/BD)
Honor Within, The (BD)
Legend of Dabhi, The (BD)
Mardi Gras Massacre (DVD)
Phobia (BD)
Supernatural: Season 6 (DVD/BD)

September 20, 2011
Chromeskull
Last to Rest 2 (DVD/BD)
Dead Heat (DVD/BD)
Dead Within Her, The (BD)
Final Exam (BD)
Haunted (DVD)
Others, The (BD)
Scary Movie 2 (BD)
Scary Movie 3 (BD)
Vamp (DVD/BD)
Zombie Apocalypse
Restoration (DVD/BD)

September 27, 2011
Bleed Out (BD)
Blood Trains, The (BD)
Dead Cat (DVD/BD)
Good Neighbors (BD)
House by the Cemetery (DVD/BD)
Love Me Deadly!
Campus Cop (DVD)
Mimic, Director's Cut (BD)
Murder, She Wrote: The (BD)
Nightmare on Elm Street, A Parts 2 and 3 (Set, BD)
Terror Trap (DVD)
Vampires: Mummies and Monsters (Corrset, DVD)

October 4, 2011
Dead Alive (BD)
Escape from Vampires Island (DVD/BD)
Screen 4 (DVD/BD)
Silent Night, Zombie Night (BD)

October 11, 2011
Bad Seed, The '54 (BD)
Night of the Demon (DVD)
Shrimp Shark (DVD)
Zombie Claws 2, The (DVD/BD)

October 18, 2011
Cape Fear (BD)
Cox, The (BD)
Hellraiser: Revelations (DVD/BD)
Hungry (DVD)
Red State (DVD/BD)

October 25, 2011
Horror Express (BD)
Island of Lost Souls 32 (DVD/BD)
Jaws: The Shark (BD)
Mardi Gras (BD)
Rare Exports (DVD/BD)
Serbian Film (A DVD/BD)
Zombie (BD)

All titles listed above include new releases on DVD or Blu-ray - formats are indicated in parentheses.
All release dates are subject to change

The Blob (1958). The Blob "creature" was a modified feather balloon during early parts of filming, while the later half of the film was shot using a colored silicone gelatine.



VIDEO CITY

VIDEO
INVASION

VIDEO CITY



Avid collectors often times speak of their most desired or prized possession as their "Holy Grail." In the world of VHS collecting, the term Holy Grail is usually used in reference to an off-beat title released with limited distribution by one of the smaller labels. Titles such as *Fates from the Quadbad Zone* and *Lunch Meat* are possibly the most iconic representations of the VHS Holy Grail. Every once in a while, there was some "holiness" produced by one of the bigger companies, such as Video City, whose entire horror and exploitation catalog has probably made every VHS collector's "Grail" list at some point in time. And I bet most of these collectors will tell you there is at least one Video City title on their top five "most wanted" lists that they are still on the hunt for.

History

Video City's impact on the home video market was significant, especially considering their brief run. Their titles span the various genres and subgenres — the majority of which were never released prior or have been since by another company. Once Video City disappeared, so did their titles ... which, for cinephiles, pretty much sucks. A movie such as *Inquisition* (with Paul Naschy) is an excellent example of a film that was poorly distributed within the US, and thanks to its obscurity, the major labels do not care

to give it another shot at home video. This is the unfortunate situation that many "VC" films are in.

Video City emerged in 1985 with a vast catalog which grabbed the attention of the larger rental stores (similar to Vestron Video's early days), and soon VC titles filled the shelves of the local Ma and Pa shops as well. Regrettably, Video City had some issues with their distribution. Although they offered quick shipping and made their titles easy to order, the company seldomly produced enough tapes to support the demand created by their advertising campaigns. As a result, many of their films never

reached stores until several months after their release date. This of course did not go over well with video store owners and as a result Video City ended up with cancelled orders and were squeezed out of store shelves by companies like Media and Vestron. There were some amazing Video City titles that never saw a store shelf in a lot of areas because of the company's failure to deliver orders in a timely fashion. Based on what I have heard from store owners, it seems VC prioritized their shipments, first getting out the larger orders

to the major cities in the US. This ultimately meant some Video City titles never made it to the more rural and suburban stores.

The lack of overall exposure and availability in all markets eventually killed Video City. The company stopped production and called it quits in 1988. A selection of their later titles were shipped on a new "Chop 'em Ups" label, which was sold via Video Treasures, however, most of the early Video City titles were cast into cinema obscurity. Titles from their catalog have been floating in limbo, a few of which are only now starting to slowly find their way onto DVD (although we are still holding out for an uncut US release of *The Devil*).



Chop 'em Ups

The use of a sublabel is very common among players in the home video industry, even today with DVD companies. The concept of a sublabel is basically a means to hide the fact that a "respectable" company would dare release "questionable" content onto home video, which describes the purpose of Chop 'em Ups Video to a T. I heard from a secondhand source that the owner of Video City wanted to make a huge hit with the horror industry, as it was becoming the big moneymaker within the home video market ... well, that and porn. Video City tinkered within the porn industry





films and didn't seem to have a problem distributing those titles.) Chop 'em Ups existed for about a year, but the sub-label did little to help revive the company's shaky stance within the market.

thanks to light "skinemax" type productions. But in order to tackle the horror industry, Video City devised a plan to launch a sublabel to host their "nastier" titles. (Which was kind of funny because they had a rather decent assortment of Nazi exploitation

the nonhorror of which now sell for \$5 to \$20 a piece — with the exception of the random bidding war. Surprisingly, it is Video City's series of Nazi exploitation titles that really increased in value (including films such as *SS Special Section Women* and *SS Hell Camp*). These releases have taken on a life of their own in the secondary market — with special thanks to their uncut film prints and amazing cover art. Outside of the horror titles, Video City's Nazi-themed titles are definitely the most collected.



Collectability

As mentioned, Video City is a Holy Grail label for a lot of serious VHS collectors. Their titles are difficult to find and even more so in a fine-to-mint condition. Values of their tapes have inched up quite a bit away from their initial MSRP. A lot of their horror and exploitation titles retain a \$100 plus value, while films like *Inquisition* and *The Devil* have been known to peak at \$200 (in good-to-excellent condition). In 2004, a sealed copy of *The Devil* sold online for a staggering \$380. Lately, mint copies have averaged around the \$200 mark. Other titles, such as *Nightmare in Blood* and *Lady Stay Dead* stick within the \$50 to 70 range. Many of Video City's releases were oddball titles,

Luckily, there have been some VHS hounds out there sniffing out some of those Video City titles from the last of the Ma and Pa stores around — saving VC from obscurity. Labels such as Video City are what makes this newly popular VHS collecting hobby all the more fun and challenging.

Video City is a wonderful company that happened to host a varied catalog of titles — titles worthy of dropping a few bucks on. This is one company that will require patience, and may require you to open that coin purse a bit wider from time to time. But for now, hit the play button on your top loader and I'll see you in the trenches! ♦

VIDEO CITY HORROR BODY COUNT:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Crazy Fat Ethel II | 7. Last Orgy of the Third Reich | 13. SS Special Section Women |
| 2. Devil, The | 8. Nazi Love Camp #27 | 14. Terror |
| 3. Frankenstein's Great Aunt Tillie | 9. Nightmare in Blood | 15. Threads |
| 4. Inquisition | 10. Shocking Asia 2 | 16. White Cannibal Queen |
| 5. Jungle Holocaust | 11. Slavers | |
| 6. Lady Stay Dead | 12. SS Hell Camp | |

THE HORND'S SOUNDS

The 'Hound's Sounds' returns this issue with two audible atmospheric amusements. These brand new instrumental CDs are guaranteed to send a chill down your spine.

MIDNIGHT SYNDICATE

CARNIVAL ARCADE

Carnival Arcade
From the masters of instrumental horror comes their latest offering, *Carnival Arcade*. Midnight Syndicate have established themselves at the forefront of the haunt industry with their seasonal soundtracks to all things Halloween — and beyond! This new release (their 14th to date) takes listeners to the Lancaster Right Carnival, a turn-of-the-century traveling circus (with more than a few skeletons in its closet). The CD is now available through the Web site, MidnightSyndicate.com, as well as Amazon, iTunes and haunt stores everywhere this fall!



Dark Night of the Scarecrow

The soundtrack to 1981's made-for-television classic *Dark Night of the Scarecrow* is now available thanks to 2M1 Records. The CD recounts all the film's greatest moments, from the "Dog Attack" to "The Chase," each track features the composition of Glenn Paxton. 2M1 Records have also released soundtracks to *Adam Green's Frozen*, as well as *The Curse of El Chemo* and *End of the Line* (amongst others), making them an emerging force in the soundtrack industry. (Available at iTunes, Amazon and 2M1Records.com.) ♦

TOY NEWS

HELLO MY FRIGHT-FILLED FIENDS! THIS ISSUE'S TOY NEWS IS CHOCK FULL OF GORY GOODS FROM SUCH TOY COMPANIES AS SIDESHOW COLLECTIBLES AND THE NAUGHTY NECA TOYS! NOT TO MENTION HAUNTING HALLOWEEN OFFERINGS FROM RUBIE'S, AND MUCH MORE!

SIDESHOW COLLECTIBLES HAVE OFFERED MORE TOWARDS STATUES AS OF LATE, INCLUDING THESE TWO NEW ADDITIONS: THE T-1000 FROM TERMINATOR 2 AND SPIKE FROM BUFFY!



MUCH LIKE THE CRITTERS FEATURED IN THE FILM, NECA'S LINE OF GREMLINS FIGURES ARE MULTIPOISING LIKE CRAZY. THE FIRST WAVE OF GREMLINS WILL CONSIST OF DAFFY AND GEORGE (FROM GREMLINS 2) AND THE FLASHER FROM THE ORIGINAL FILM. VIRTUALLY EVERY CHARACTER FROM BOTH FILMS WILL EVENTUALLY SEE RELEASE, INCLUDING THE ELECTRIC GREMLIN, "PHANTOM," AND EVEN THE SPIDER-MONK.

PEGASUS MODELS HAS TEAMED UP WITH SIDESHOW COLLECTIBLES TO MAKE THEIR LINE OF WAR OF THE WORLDS PRE-PAINT MODELS AVAILABLE TO A LARGER AUDIENCE. ALIENS AND SHIPS FROM THE CLASSIC AND THE MODERN REMAKE OF WAR OF THE WORLDS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PRE-SELL



AMOK TIME TOYS PLAN ON RELEASING TWO MINI-STATUES BASED ON TOR JOHNSON (AS SEEN IN PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE) THIS DECEMBER. TOR WILL HAVE POSEABLE ARMS, AND EITHER COME WITH LEGS OR A GRAVEYARD BASE AND ARE LIMITED TO ONLY 100 PIECES!





RUBIE'S HAVE CONTINUED TO UNVEIL THEIR 2011 HALLOWEEN OFFERINGS, WHICH INCLUDE A SERIES OF NEAR-LIFE-SIZED "GHOST WALKERS" - FOAM FIGURES OF MODERN AND CLASSIC MONSTERS "COMING OUT OF THE GROUND." INCLUDED IS LEATHERFACE, FREDDY (SHOWN LAST ISSUE), JASON (NOT SHOWN), AND AN ASSORTMENT OF UNIVERSAL MONSTERS. ALSO LOOK FOR A CHOPTOP (TCM2) MASK AND LEATHERFACE WALL MOUNT.



JOINING FREDDY (PREVIOUSLY SHOWN), WILL BE JASON AND EXTRA CANDIE VORIES IN HALLOWEEN STORES THIS FALL.



WITH EACH PASSING YEAR, LIFE-SIZED ANIMATRONIC LICENSED CHARACTERS ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE POPULAR. THIS YEAR TOPS THE CAKE AS FAR AS NEW OFFERINGS GO, WITH CHARACTERS INCLUDING SCREAM'S GHOSTFACE CLITE SIZE AND ANIMATRONIC, FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER (ANIMATRONIC) AND REGAN FROM THE EXORCIST (ANIMATRONIC).

FIGURE FLASHBACK

To compliment this issue's sci-fi theme, we thought it only appropriate to look back at one of the coolest lines of vinyl action figures based on earth-bound, sci-fi monsters! That's right, these creatures aren't from the stars, but from our very own backyard. First we have the She-Creature, a beauty reverted back to her prehistoric sea monster form. Next, we have "Marty" from Day the World Ended, a mutant created by nuclear contamination. Last up is War of the Colossal Beast - the continued tale of Glenn Manning, a man transformed into a monstrous alien who originally released by X-Plus Toys in 2003.



MAKING THE MUNSTERS

WITH SCULPTOR
JEAN ST. JEAN



TV's favorite frightening family – The Munsters – have been a staple in the world of toys and merchandising since their inception. Whether it be classic Ben Cooper Halloween costumes, die-cast cars and model kits, comics, lunch boxes, plush or bobble-heads – the fanbase for Herman, Lily, Grandpa, Eddie and Marilyn Munster is ravenous. It was no surprise then, when earlier this year Diamond Select Toys (who have been busy releasing figures based on the classic Universal Monsters) announced their plans to produce a series of quality-sculpted figures based on this 1960s staple. Action figure fans were even more interested in the fact that the entire line would be sculpted by Jean St. Jean Studios (go way back to *HorrorHound* #1 to see our feature article on this talented sculptor). It has been over five years since we last focused on Jean's work – so we thought, what better time than now to check back with the man who has been busy designing everything from Thundercats 18" scale figures for Mezco Toyz to classic superhero DC Comics statues and busts for DC Direct.

HorrorHound: So Jean ... how did you become involved with *The Munsters* toyline in such an exclusive capacity?

Jean St. Jean: I had done a couple of the original Universal Monsters for [Diamond], the Bride and the Wolfman, so when this license came up they asked if I was interested in sculpting any of the characters. We agreed I should do the whole line to make sure the scale and detail were consistent within the family members. My studio has done a number of Diamond Select Toy lines all the way through. In this case, I wanted to do everything personally, so I sculpted and articulated all of them, fabricated all the accessories and molded and cast them all myself. All the paint work was done by my studio as well.

HH: Did you have input on the figure's articulation and accessories? How much decision making did you have in this facet of the product?

JSJ: From the outset Diamond knew they wanted more articulation than the previous Universal figures. I decided to go with a similar articulation setup to the Batmaster Galactica toys we did. Rather than have the factory tool all the joints into the sculpture I decided to do everything myself on this end. I also made sure to scale them with the existing Universal Monsters, so there would be a continuity with all the monster figures. In terms of accessories, Diamond really wanted to be able to capture the personality of the set of the show. They also wanted to take the build-an-accessory idea from the Starline lines to create a cool large accessory as a collector incentive, and to further their overall atmospheric concept for the line. The specific character accessories they left to me. Some of them, like Grandpa, have tons of possibilities. I just decide to make as much as I could, and whatever got priced out of the package might get used in a reprint or variant.

So, Grandpa got his cane, an extra hand holding the cigar, his pet bat Igor, and a small lab setup. I really wanted to give the sets a retro feel like the old Aurora kits I built as a kid. Herman was tough, it's not like he has a lot of things you immediately identify with him except the massive lunch box. Since he is also an immense figure I had to consider his individual cost, so I kept it to the one accessory. For Lily, there's plenty of different things from the show, but the main things I kept coming back to were the hair, the organ or the clock. I felt the clock made a better choice as it helped to support DST's atmosphere concept. Plus, everyone who's seen the show remembers the cuckoo clock with the raven named Eddie, of course, got Spot's collar and his Wolf Wolf doll – and Marilyn ... some school books (*Better Times and Gardens*). All the figures will also come with small wood floor bases.

HH: How are the figures being released? Early reports stated a two-pack with Marilyn/Eddie was planned. Can you elaborate?

JSJ: Well, one, which should hit around October, has Grandpa, Herman and Lily. The parts for the electric chair will be distributed through those three packages. Marilyn and Eddie are planned tentatively as a specialty two-pack.

HH: Explain how the license works in conjunction with likenesses. Do you have a lot of back and forth with approvals?

JSJ: In general, there are usually a few layers to get through at each stage – the client, then the licensor and then the actor's representation. In this case, it seemed to be through Universal directly, although I didn't deal with any of that. There were a few minor hiccups on all of them except Lily, who required a few revisions and resubmissions to get final approval.

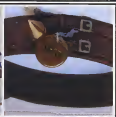
HH: What do you hope will result from this toyline? More classic TV or horror (*Dark Shadows*, etc.)? Or more work from you in regards to highly detailed (and highly sculpted) toy lines?

JSJ: I enjoy working on full lines and especially this retro stuff as these are the shows I grew up watching. *Adams Family* would definitely be a cool follow-up.

HH: What *Munsters* variations do you hope to have a hand in down the line (i.e., possibly a Herman in *Knights* suit)?

JSJ: We have to be a little cagey on this one as it hinges on a lot of different variables, but I think it's safe to say there will be different offerings for the specialty market and for Toys "R" Us, as in the past.

Look for *The Munsters* in Toys "R" Us, comic book stores and specialty toy retailers in time for Halloween. ♦





Invasion from Mars (1953)
Perfectly capturing the nightmarish qualities of childhood, Cameron William Mendon's local municipal effort was also the first "alien invasion" film shot in color. Jimmy Hunt whistles a flying saucer's arrival, but after investigating the crash site, his parents return somehow "changed" with creepy scraws upon the backs of their necks! Unable to convince doubting town elders of looming disaster, Hunt's community is slowly transformed around him into upholding slaves—serving a tentacled Martian head—while its stargazer Arthur Franz (on his side against the interstellar nightmare, A true classic of the 'energy is us' sci-fi. (Tobe Hooper's 1986 remake also enjoys its own cut following.)



It Came from Outer Space (1953)
One of the finest sci-fi outings of the '50s, Jack Arnold's masterful direction captures both the "ooh-ahh" factor of then-now 3-D special effects and the isolated, wind-swept atmosphere of the Arizona desert. Richard Carlson stars as an astronomer investigating the sudden appearance of "Xenomorphs" (eyeball-like creatures able to assume human form). These benevolent beings, stranded a la E.T., are just looking for a way to get home, thus bucking the trend of "Reds under the beds" subtext prevalent among most alien-encounter movies of the era. Seeing Russell Johnson (Gilligan's Island's the Professor) show up as one of the replaced locals is just icing atop the awesome cake.



It Conquered the World (1956)
Roger Corman's entertainingly cheaply produced progammer stars Lee Van Cleef as a brilliant if misjudged scientist who falls, under the spell of a Venusian interloper, aiding in its quest for world domination. Utilizing flying space bats that attach themselves to the base of their victim's skull, the extraterrestrial baddie exercises mind control over key community figures, with only Peter Graves and Beverly I. Hale your living guts! Garland "left to stop the madness." Monster maker Paul Blaisdell's wedding, leaving vegetable menace is the unquestioned highlight of the proceedings, but Corman's swift direction and Lou Rusoff's pulpy juvenile script can do more of history's memorable mo-mos into G.I.W.'s 71-minute running time.



Quatermass 2 (1957)
Never trust people with skin problems, as they are likely being controlled by an alien substance out for world conquest. Or so acclaimed British writer Nigel Kneale would have us believe. With the Quatermass series, Kneale single-handedly created one of the most influential TV/movie franchises in England's post-Monor history. This, the second of three the-

INVASION

A HISTORY OF BODY SNATCHERS

BY MIKE KATZMAYER

"I want you that what you're starting to read is full of loose ends and unanswered questions. It will not be neatly tied up at the end, everything resolved and satisfactorily explained. Not by me it won't, anyway."

Originally serialized in Collier's magazine in 1954, then published by Dial in 1955, Jack Finney's classic novel *The Body Snatchers* cast into words an intangible fear that has plagued mankind for ages: Not death or destruction, but rather dehumanization, where the individual is deprived of feelings, free will and moral judgment. Where we, in essence, stop being us and start being "them." It's no wonder that scholars and critics have found Finney's story and its four official film adaptations perfect subjects for social commentaries a-go-go. From Communist red scares to anti-McCarthyism screeds, from self-preoccupied "Me Generations" to militarized mindsets, the shoe continues to fit each and every generation, the underlying fear of losing one's identity having lost not an iota of its potency.

Finney unfolds the tale of quiet suburb Mill Valley (located 15 miles north of San Francisco), whose occupants are being replaced by perfect physical duplicates grown from plantlike pods of extraterrestrial origin. Even more disconcerting, the transformation occurs while the human subject sleeps—when the duplication is complete, the original organism is reduced to dust. The only observable difference between the original and its parasitic copy? "There's no emotion. None. Just the pretense of it. The words, the gesture, the tone of voice, everything else is the same, but not the feeling." An immediate success upon publication, producer Walter Wanger secured the film rights in 1955 and promptly set about assembling his creative task force to bring it to the silver screen.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956)

"You fools! You're in danger! Can't you see? They're after you—they're after all of us! Our wives, our children, everyone! They're here already! You're next!"

The theme of an alien/foreign entity occupying/replacing the bodies of those nearest and dearest to us had been utilized in horror cinema as early as 1927 with Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* and has persisted throughout features as plentiful and varied as *Planet of the Vampires*, *Invasion from Mars*, *It Came from Outer Space*, *It Conquered the World*, *I Married a Monster from Outer Space*, *The Stepford Wives*, *The Thing*, *The Faculty* and many more. It also plays upon the same idea as *Battle of the Worlds*, with format-

friends/family left shambling, absurd, masquerades of humanity. But it is Wanger's 1956 production of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, executed with such clarity and urgency, which has come to exemplify the concept.

Daniel Mannering was charged with adapting Finney's prose, with Don Siegel—whose knack for muscular screen action had caught Wanger's eye—tapped to direct. Kevin McCarthy assumed the lead role of Dr. Miles Bennell, paired opposite the lovely Dana (pronounced "Dah-na") Wynter. King Donovan, having appeared in two 1953 sci-fi romps, *The Magnetic Monster* and *The Beast from 20,000*

Fathoms, was cast as pipe-smoking author Jack Belloc. Donovan's onscreen wife was played by House of Wax alumni Carolyn Jones, soon to be immortalized as the ghoulishly sexy matronch Morica in TV's *The Addams Family*. As a woman convinced that her Uncle Ira is not her Uncle Ira, Virginia Christine creates an initially tragic, then snarler supporting character. (Fellow fencers might also remember Christine as Princess Ananka, evocatively emerging from Louisiana bayou mud in *The Mummy's Curse* [1944].) Sam Peckinpah, who appears briefly as Charlie the gas man, also served as invasion dialogue director—though self-perpetuated claims of his script "improvements" have been widely denounced.

Wanger and Siegel had hoped to lens the film in Mill Valley itself, but the 20-day/\$350,000 schedule and budget proved too tight for location shooting so remote from Hollywood. Consequently, the southern California village of Sierra Madre stood in for the fictitious "Santa Mira," with the majority of scenes filmed at Allied Artists' Los Angeles studio. (The off-used Blonson and Beachwood Canyons provided the surrounding hills where Miles and Becky flee their pod-infected community.)

The plant seed pods were created by future master mask maker Don Post (*Halloween II*; *Season of the Witch*), while Bill Beaudine, Jr. (son of infamous exploitation director William "One Shot" Beaudine) served as assistant director. Composer Carmen Dragon's final feature film score is chock full of '50s sci-fi music cues, with brass, string and piano refrains effectively heightening the mood.

To avoid confusion with Val Lewton's 1945 Boris Karloff vehicle *The Body Snatcher*, Allied Artists and Wanger sought alternate titles for their feature. Suggestions included *Evil in the Night*, *They Came from Another World*, *Better Off Dead*, with Siegel and McCarthy's personal choice being *Sleep No More*. Ultimately, in keeping with the use of drive-in programming for younger crowds (and let's be



remembered, this was a relatively low-budget "B" picture from the start), the sensationalistic invasion of the Body Snatchers monster was decided upon, much to the cast's chagrin. Released February 5, 1956, the film immediately met with critical and financial success.

Produced as it was during the politically charged Cold War '50s, the subtextual fear of conspiracy teemed beneath *Invasion's* surface. When Benford queries what could be causing these doppleganger delusions within Santa Mira's community, the local psychiatrist replies, "Worry about what's going on in the world, probably. Many viewed the film as an indictment of communism, with characters transformed into unfeeling doubles if they failed to 'wake up' to the encroaching Red Threat. While others saw in the pod populous HUAC's ruthless with hounding name-namers who looked like friends but sold you out when the opportunity arose. Still others viewed it as a metaphor for bland conformity in post-war America. Though Finney, Siegel, McCarthy, Manwaring and Wanger have all gone on record stating they had no specific allegory to impart, it is this hyper-maleable "fear of the other that looks like us" that has lent the film its venerable staying power. That, and the simple fact it is an artfully constructed thriller, one that ratchets up the pressure until we find ourselves nervously wondering about the person sitting next to us.

In this new world order, there is no place for love or sex. Miles' kiss of Becky outside the Sky Terrace restaurant officially rekindles their romantic relationship — in fact, via a sexy throwaway line, Miles indicates that this is how he knows Becky is Becky. An hour's screen time later, that romantic gesture's dark mirror is presented, with Becky's pod kiss shattering her and Miles' future forever. Note Becky's presto change-o transformation has been the subject of debate for years, as it seems highly unlikely that there was a spare pod squirmed away in the cave where they have taken refuge, not to mention that previous transformations have taken what appears to be an hour or so at the very least. However, since the shock effect of the sequence succeeds so mightily, with McCarthy's horrified face retreating from his former paramour's, viewers are willing to continue for the ride and refrain from calling the logic police.

McCarthy's committed central performance, building from blasé self-satisfaction to raving dementia with nary a false note, anchors the picture and lends it much-needed gravitas.

Whether tossing off flirtatious bon mots, jumping from still-moving cars or violently hauling Wynter up never-ending staircases, his character's actions are never called into doubt (By the way, the seemingly too-light weight of the

pods as McCarthy removes them from his car trunk is straight out of Finney's novel, which declared them "weightless as children's balloons." The only false note arrives in the final "The End" shot, which holds on McCarthy's obsessive face just a shade too long for comfort before going to black, undermining his fear and relief at finally being believed. Speaking of the ending.

The film originally concluded with Miles fruitlessly attempting to alert highway passersby of the oncoming invasion, an ending that satisfied both Siegel and Manwaring but whose downbeat tone spooked Allied. In response, the studio insisted on a bookending device that resulted in the central story becoming a flashback, as well as adding a last-minute highway accident involving an overturned truckload of pods to lend credence to Miles' wild tale and imply hope for the human race. Despite off-beat grumblings regarding this so-called "happy ending," how happy is it really? Do we truly believe the FBI is going to jump on the case based simply on a truck full of pods and a lunatic's testimony? Is that all it takes? Methinks humanity still has a serious uphill climb ahead.

Besides, if we're looking for combat endings against which to smack our foreheads, one need look no further than Finney's original closing pages, wherein the alien apocalypse is undone by Miles setting a single field of pods ablaze (which, incidentally, splutters out after cooking only a few of the suckers). Even with the entire town of Santa Mira under their control and reinforcements already sprouting via relatives in the surrounding areas, the pods take this single act of defiance as grounds for abandoning their entire scheme and fly off into outer space before Miles and Becky's wondering eyes. Yes, Finney conjures an intergalactic fleet of vegetable dirigibles as his triumphant concluding image — let's be thankful no one's inclined to put that on film... yet.

While we're smiling, it's a good time to point out that although much of Manwaring's script's humor was exorcised at the behest of executives (the prevailing wisdom being "horror and humor don't mix"), a few gems managed to elude the studio shears, including Donovan's line, "Watch out for yourselves," as the two couples split up. Another sly wink occurs in the Belcoed's rac room, hanging directly above Donovan's still-evolving doppleganger: an enlarged framed cover of one of Jack's books, "Mirror Noir." The pod people certainly represent a "black mirror" of their unsuspecting human hosts.

Less effective is the studio-imposed voiceover, much of which heavily-handedly reinforces what we see onscreen, or, worse, ends up gilding the emotional fly of McCarthy's onscreen arc.

For instance, imagine the opening scene of Miles returning to Santa Mira from his medical conference (2-3 weeks after the infestation has

struck). Quatermass' movies produced by Hammer during the '50s and '60s, proved to be the most ominous. Director Val Guest, a talented Hammer regular, cultivates a superb sense of paranoia as Prof. Bernard Quatermass (an excellent Brian Donlevy) uncovers the alien conspiracy.



I Married a Monster from Outer Space (1958)

Despite its gonorrhea of a title, this terrific little sci-fi mystery is well worth a look. Blushing little Gloria Talbot muses that her new mate just "ain't the man I fell in love with," a true statement from the mad scientist since the groom has actually been replaced by a creature from space. All of the husbands in town are soon swamped out with alien counterparts (spongy, frog-faced monstrosities in their natural state), leaving the sanctity of marriage in the hands of a few resourceful females (and one lone bachelor, lucky devil). A well-told tale of conspiracy and paranoia from director Gene Fowler, Jr., with minimal special effects well employed.



Planet of the Vampires (1959)

From the skilled lens of Italian maestro Mario Bava comes this atmospheric thriller about two spacehips responding to a distress signal on a supposedly deserted planet 14 years before Ridley Scott's *Alien*. The terrifying truth is soon revealed: the inky alien parasites inhabiting this strange howl world possess the ability to reanimate the dead, using the corpses as hosts. As crew members are overtaken one by one, suspicion and distrust run rampant among the survivors. But the real marvel is watching Bava spin straw into gold — using his trademark colored lighting schemes and endless clouds of dry ice, he generates a palpable mood of dread amidst the Styrofoam rocks and sets. A low-budget gem, capped with a satisfying doom-and-gloom conclusion.



They Came from Beyond Space (1957)

Produced by Amicus, this tiny forty-nine sci-fi for the studio may come short of Hammer's successful Quatermass franchise, but it still manages to entertain. With Ffoliote Francis in the director's chair, the film follows nine meteorites that crash into the fields of Cornwall — when scientists are sent in to investigate, they become possessed by an unknown alien force. Thanks to a metal plate in his head, Robert Hudson remains unaffected by the strange phenomenon and heads off to uncover their secret plan. The final reel's climactic revelation might not wholly satisfy, but



gung-fu Mike Gough puts in a welcomed appearance as the alien Master of the Moon.

The Stepford Wives (1975)

Serky, funny, inflammatory and spooky, William Goldstein's

Frankenstein Meets the Spacemonster (1965): A real schlock fest, this film features an alien race who shoot down a NASA ship helmed by an android, who later "tangles" with the aliens' mutant monster.

adaptation of Ian Levine's best-seller is that it's aimed at a socially relevant, thoroughly entertaining sci-fi horror hybrid. Frustrated photographer wife... and mother Katherine Ross trades in 'Big Apple madness for the idyllic Connecticut suburb of Starport, only to discover that the town's females are a submissive, domestic, almost... robotic lot unequally preoccupied with fulfilling their husbands' every passing desire. Director Peter Forbes ratchets up the tension as Ross grows increasingly suspicious of the town's 'Men's Association,' ultimately fleeing for her life and soul.



The Aliens Are Coming (1980)
Frape obscure TV-movie history comes producer Osgar Martin's unscripted alien song, which very much resembles a series pilot episode in the vein of his 60s sci-fi hit *The Invaders*. (At

the end, a threatening voice-over even promises: "The nightmare is just beginning!") As it turned out, the aliens and their Nevada-based, non-benign planetary activities lasted a total of 90 minutes — enough time for them to try and steal our hydro-electric energy by exacting mind control and/or inhabiting the bodies of human workers. Lacking much excitement, the entertainment value comes via our impossibly witty lead Tom Magin, chatty Fox and spotting a young Ed Harris in the opening sequence.



The Hyden (1967)
A violent, fast-paced diversion, this terrific sci-fi action flick is shot through with Kevin Yagher's wickedly-goopy make-up effects. An ill-fortuned peacock alien worm overrules

the minds of its human hosts (a trick borrowed by a certain Mr. Voorhees in *Jason Goes to Hell* and, used again in Stephen King's *Dreencatcher*), using its hosts as literal body armor, bruising, bashing and battering them into pulpiness. Director Jack Sholder, rebounding from the mire of *A Nightmare on Elm Street 2*, sends exotrological lemming Kyle MacLachlan and earthing homicide cop Michael Nouri on a merry chase after the bad buggie through the urban jungles of L.A. Sloppy schlocky fun.



The Borrower (1994)
With its wholly original premise, John McLaughlin's follow-up to Henry Potkin of *A Small Killer*, is quite the cinematic oddity. A convicted alien original is devolved into a human being, then condemned to exist on earth. Unfortunately, the human form is ill-suited to E.T. biology, resulting in the head, well, exploding. To survive, it must constantly snitch other people's minds to replace its own. As the body count rises, detective Rae Dawn Chong needs to determine what is loose in her city. Distasteful, McLaughlin & Co. only partially succeed in balancing offbeat black humor with straight-up horror, resulting in an uneven ride containing some

(serious) mind-blowing. 'Something evil' had taken possession of the town... overtone — the sense of nothing-wrong-with-no-place would have been multiplied exponentially, allowing the mystery to unfold before our eyes. Luckily, while extraneous, the voiceover only rarely proves overly distracting.

The legacy of the 1956 original would endure through countless theatrical reissues and television viewings, establishing itself as one of the high-water marks of 50s sci-fi cinema. Its success also helped spur the ongoing genre craze which would dominate drive-in screens for over a decade. Despite waves of radioactive gigantism, Hammer horrors, Hitchcock thrillers and Castle gumrocky reverence continued to be paid to a certain 50-minute paean to pod people. Which is why when producer Robert H. Solo announced in 1977 that he was commencing production on a revival of the classic, more than a few eyebrows were raised. Even with sci-fi fever (spurred by the one-two punch of 1977's *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*) sweeping the turnbikes, who would dare meddle with a masterpiece?

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1978)

It's a big conspiracy. "What's a conspiracy?" Everything.

Solo, whose producing credits include Ken Russell's *The Devils*, Steven Seagal's debut feature *Above the Law* and Dennis Hopper's L.A. gang drama *Coolies*, invested \$10,000 of his own money to secure the rights to remake *Invasion*. A fan of the original film, Solo saw an opportunity to realize the classic nightmare in color, with enhanced special effects as well as a chance to address what he called the "cop-out ending."

Director Philip Kaufman's worthy update proved to be reverential to its predecessor whilst striking its own quirky, innovative and more graphic chords. With coggy scenes of violence, surprising PG-rated nudity, sinister acting, and perfect execution of tension and release, Kaufman and screenwriter W. D. Richter relocated Finney's novel's setting from Smalltown, USA to that of the equally isolative existence within a bustling metropolis (San Francisco), where individuals' relationships are often so tenuous, we might not initially notice if our neighbors had been "replaced." (The following year, Richter would re-envision another classic story for a new generation with his adaptation of John Badham's *Dracula* starring Frank Langella.)

Under the opening credits, we see the aliens in their home planet form, amoeba-like organisms that float through the universe, landing on Earth in goopy, gel-like droplets. These soon blossom into tiny flower buds that affix themselves to nearly every form of plant life. As fans of the original might suspect, from these darling buds of space will grow the seed of humanity's downfall, and there's a distinct

killer left as a schoolteacher's off-camera moral instructs students to "take them home to your parents."

Though all of the principal cast members were rising stars, none besides headliner Donald Sutherland (here playing "Matthew Bennell") were legitimate stars. Broke Adams had recently appeared in Terrence Malick's *Days of Heaven* and Ken Wiedenhorn's understated Nazi zombie epic *Shock Waves*, while Veronica Cartwright's career as a child actress had begun nearly two decades earlier, appearing in Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*. Jeff Goldblum had come a long way since rapping Charles Bronson's daughter as "Freak #1" in *Death Wish*, but *Invasion 78* represented a turning point for the actor. Art Hindle, co-star of Bob Clark's proto-slasher *Black Christmas*, rounded out the cast as Adams' onscreen lover Geoffrey, one of the first characters to "burn."

Of course, significant genre efforts lay in all of their futures. Cartwright next appeared in a little flick called *Alien*, and one has to wonder if David Cronenberg wasn't a huge fan of Kaufman's film, as he subsequently cast Hindle in *The Brood*, Adams in *The Dead Zone* and Goldblum in *The Fly*. (It's also worth noting here that Goldblum appears in both *Invasion 78* and *The Fly*, acknowledged as two of the best sci-fi remakes ever made.)

It is within these unique, idiosyncratic, flawed, annoying, endearing and utterly human characters that the movie's secret weapon lies: From Goldblum's insecure natterings to Cartwright's red-eyed hysteria, from Sutherland's barely concealed crush to Adams' zany eyeball stunt, the crime of trading in these distinct personalities for something uniform and safe is keenly felt. A world in which there is no shared joke-telling, no stupid tricks, no neuroses... this is not a world worth living

in/for. Even more so than the previous version, this message shines through.

As if giving their stamps of approval, Kevin McCarthy and Don Siegel appear in a pair of memorable cameos. For McCarthy, Richter conceived a marvelous moment, essentially an extension of the actor's role from two decades prior. As Sutherland and Adams drive to a book party, they encounter a wild-eyed madman banging on car hoods in the street, shouting, "They're coming! You're next!" As Kaufman puts it, "It's as if he's run twenty years from the first movie all across the landscape from a small town to a big city to try and warn us." Siegel's appearance is more notorious, as a pod cab driver who alerts his vegetative compatriots of the fleeing fugitives' whereabouts. "Carrying two passengers — type H."

Not so much a cameo as the best form of stunt casting occurs via the pivotal role of self-help author David Kibner. Though famous for his 79-episode stint as Mr. Spock on



TV's *Star Trek*. Leonard Nimoy had not appeared in a feature film since the obscure 1971 western, *Catlow*. Originally slated to direct the big screen reboot of *Star Trek*, Kaufman had met Nimoy during pre-production meetings and although the director's involvement in the project eventually fell through, a bond was formed with this "wonderful actor." The choice is nothing shy of brilliant, a knowing nod to his most famous role. Nimoy gamely expands upon the fables of the human condition, jousts drolly with Goldblum's less-successful writer, etc. But once his sinister true identity is revealed, he becomes the alien race's mouthpiece – and as he calmly delivers their philosophies (along with a sedative) to Sutherland and Adams, Nimoy evokes every viewer's inherent mistrust of doctors of any stripe.

Richter's screenplay functions as both a commentary on urban paranoia as well as the self-involved "Me Generation," a world of EST gurus and New Age mud bath houses. Geoffrey is first seen wearing headphones, more involved in his basketball game than his relationship with Elizabeth (Adams). We see here an insulating mechanism at work, cutting Geoffrey off from relating to others and the world. This is already a world of disconnectedness, of doubt and mistrust. *Invasion 73* also serves handily as a metaphor for failing relationships, where someone is "not the person we fell in love with." People change, imperceptibly, and we find ourselves wondering if it was us that changed or them.

Practicing psychiatrist Denny Zeitlin, a college chum of Kaufman's, provided the film's score, a buzzing, electronic, ambient sonic masterpiece working in perfect communion with Ben Burt's unerring sound effects. For the show-stopping "backyard transformation scene" (more on that in a moment), Burt included recordings of cracking cucumbers, pencil erasers, and the heartbeat from an ultrasound recorded on his pregnant wife. Additionally, as the film progresses, the natural diegetic sounds (cucklets, birds chirping) fade, until only mechanical sounds (silens, the garbage trucks) are heard – a subtle but effective aural choice.

To augment this not-quite-right atmosphere, on every street corner (and every corner of the screen) Kaufman populates his film with random characters and scenarios. While he rarely holds on these for any extended amount of time, these snapshots function on an almost unconscious level, lending the picture its off-kilter feel, one filled with anxiety and chaos. Example: Robert Duval, as a favor to Kaufman, mysteriously appears as a priest on a swing in the opening moments... and then is never seen again. The audience is left thinking,

"Was that really Robert Duval?" It's a magic trick of misdirection and disfigurement – a subtle brushstroke in a world where nothing is certain.

In addition to the urbanization and '70s social commentary, Richter also conceived "the screech," the unforgettable means by which the pods identify stray humans (achieved by electronically modifying a pig's squeal). The first time we hear it, Geoffrey has just discovered that Matthew has associated with Elizabeth before her double has finished its duplicating process. However, since Geoffrey's screech occurs off-screen and we have not yet seen a pod person "out" anyone, we do not identify it as such. It registers instead on a subliminal level. Only later, after San Francisco has been overtaken and there is screeching and finger-pointing galore, do we consciously (and retroactively) place Geoffrey's alarm within its proper context.

Speaking of pods and transformations, the groundbreaking makeup effects were provided by Thomas Burman and Eduardo Henningues, both of whom worked on 1977's *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. As the human host withers, flakes of dried skin flutering in the night breeze, the pulsating, writhing, cotton candy-covered figures gradually evolve from slimy tubes to humanoid shapes to full-on doppelgängers of our principal cast. The backyard transformation scene's execution is astonishing and flawless, capped by Sutherland's gruesome hoe-to-head splatter moment. Burman, who currently keeps television medical dramas like *Grey's Anatomy* and *Nip/Tuck* good n' bloody, boasts a

wealth of genre credits, including *Frogs*, *Food of the Gods*, *The Mantou*, *The Beast Within*, *Prophecy*, *My Bloody Valentine*, *Cat People*, and *Halloween III: Season of the Witch*.

Throughout, Kaufman cultivates a pitch perfect sense of suspense and dread, nowhere more evident than the scene where Matthew attempts to report the duplicates growing in his backyard. As the telephone operator instructs him to, "Wait right there, Mr. Bennett," the confusion and desperation in Sutherland's voice is palpable as he stammers, "How do you know my name? I didn't tell you my name..."

As Matthew and Elizabeth attempt to move through the crowds unnoticed, we are treated to one of the movie's most indelible images: the bizarre mandog. Matthew's earlier kicking of a pod lying beside a sleeping street musician (Joe Bellini) and his canine companion apparently causes

hilarious moments, a handful of Kevin Yeager FX highlights and a tense, downbeat finale.



Seventyfour (1992)
Dating back to a time when Full Moon "honcho" Charles Band still had comfortable little budgets to play with, this largely derivative story takes place in the small town of "Cornel Valley, where unwitting citizens are being taken over by seeds from a parasite alien lifeform. Spical effects designer John Carl Bunchler and his team amp'd the well-trodden material with enjoyable creature designs, director Peter Maronigian marries a heady pace, and young Canadian actress Andrea Roth stands out among the no-narray cast. Needless to say, things get more than a little silly, but this Full Moon quickie remains a fun watch for not-too-demanding sci-horror lovers.

Invasion (1992)
When independent filmmaker Philip J. Cook convinced legendary Israeli producer Menahem Golan to executive-produce his sophomore outing, the results were an undeniable, B-movie genre melding. An alien electronic intelligence is transforming the folks from a military stratos into mindless slaves – enter tabloid reporter Hans Behrmann, who gets entangled in the story of a lifeline. With a screenplay far too ambitious for its skinny budgetary means, *Invasion* is one of the strangest alien conspiracy films ever concocted, as Cook's ridiculous plot doesn't even try to take itself seriously. Six words for the movie's finale: "Giant Philosophizing Megalomaniac Stop-Motion Robot." Dare we call this a misunderstood masterpiece? No, probably not.



The Puppet Masters (1994)
This ambitious and entrancing adaptation of Robert A. Heinlein's novel kicks things into gear from the outset when Eric Thal, Julia Warner and the ever-compotent Donald Sutherland rush off to Apollonia, Iowa to investigate a verified UFO landing. However, coffee-minded alien parasites have already begun to take over, turning humans into puppets to do their bidding. Though writing trio Ted Elliott, Terry Rossio and David S. Goyer occasionally overextend themselves with their disjointed combo of sci-fi, horror, thriller, action and drama, they manage to admissibly tie things up in the end. Roy Arbogast and Co.'s animatronic "slylike parasites" are fine creations, earning plenty of well-deserved screen time.



The Facility (1996)
Robert Rodriguez's spiraled sci-fi/horror hybrid is one for the books, even if solely for rekindling the space invaders sub-genre during the '90s. This time it's alien-infected high school teachers who can't be tossed anymore,



...and then is never seen again. The audience is left thinking,



Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1978) was one of the first films to use the term "pod person." The film was directed by David Schickel and produced by Robert J. Zemeckis. The film was a major success, grossing over \$100 million worldwide.



with a small group of students — amongst them soon-to-be titaness Josh Hartnett and Elijah Wood — discovering the terrifying truth. Screen scribe/writer Kevin Williamson splendidly has his way with stereotypical teenage characters in a clever script stuffed with titillating genre references. All the performances are outstanding — particularly Robert Patrick, who devours his every scene — while KNS Effects Group delivers some of their best work, mixing CGI with traditional monster mayhem.



The Astronaut's Wife (1999)
When astronaut Jeffrey Depp returns from a space walk, a seemingly changed man, concerned (and pregnant) bride Charlize Theron begins to suspect strange doings are afoot.

Borrowing elements from both *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *Rosemary's Baby*, writer/director Rand Ravich cultivates an eerie atmosphere of mistrust and alienation (pun intended). Though largely ignored upon release due to its chilly tone, derivative subject matter, poor marketing and unfortunate title, the visual effects and Ravich's carefully constructed color schemes are worthy of attention, as are the intelligent, complex characterizations rendered by its two leads. Worth revisiting.



They Are Among Us (2004)
What if our planets were actually aliens, staring colonies on earth, observing human beings into their race to secretly walk among us? With such a tongue-tangling, mind-bending premise, writer/director Jeffrey Obrow's TV movie would have probably beenfield from a talented script supervisor as the on-screen story comes off muddled and inconsistent. Still, a handful of interesting ideas stand out, as do the commendable FX. In an era where CGI had taken over, Obrow audaciously opts for practical makeup effects and old-fashioned monster designs (ling of '80s creature features—well surely remember his tiny magnanimopus from 1987, *The Kindred*). A curious but enjoyable effort.



Invasion of the Pod People (2007)
Coinciding with the *Kidnapped* film's release, this is a prime example of *The Asylum's* "incoherent M.O." — a so-so CGI title sequence, followed by less, so acting, scripting, stilted video cinematography, sound, etc. ... In this transparent spin, the world is menaced by podded ginger roots (?) that subsequently transform low-rent versions of high-priced fashion models into unzipped, uncaring leeches. (Curiously, there doesn't seem to be much change in these pod people's behavior, and their acting is just as lousy.) While gratuitous useless scenes marginally entice viewers, the cheap production values and idiotic storytelling take their toll, leaving viewers empty inside and about 85 minutes poorer.

Additional sidebar material by Gerrit Webbeck

them to literally join forces (accomplished via a mask of Belan placed over the pod's head). This frightening amalgam of man and beast causes Elizabeth to exclaim in horror, revealing her and Matthew's humanity (in the '56 version, Becky tips her hand by letting out a shriek when a dog is nearly hit by a car). By the way, that's Jerry Garcia listed in the end credits as having provided the bangio licks.

Both the 1956 and '78 versions feature their male protagonist abandoning his female counterpart in order to investigate the source of some strangewonderful music. Which begs the question: why would anyone choose to leave their partner behind at such a tenuous time, especially knowing the music would also attract the attention of the pods? Granted, since both films handle these scenes so deftly and their payoffs are so devastating, audiences are inclined to forget/forgive these questionable actions. Upon repeated viewings, however, they do stand out as flimsy devices to separate the characters in order for the female's transformation to occur.

Kaufman's picture also includes the attempted destruction of the greenhouse-cum-pod-manufacturing plant from Finney's novel. Sutherland utilizes an axe and long strands of lighted butts to rain down destruction as opposed to gasoline, but the results are just as dynamic. (Sutherland insisted on performing his own stunts in the climax, without harnesses or nets. He also insisted on his curly hairdo, but that's another story.)

Which brings us to the unforgettable conclusion, where Matthew "fingers" his former friend as the last remaining human — an ending conceived by Kaufman (with Richer and Solo's approval) and only revealed to Sutherland the morning of the day's shoot. Matthew's emotions are fairly muted to begin with, so when we observe his day-to-day actions at the pod-occupied office we assume/hope he has integrated himself into this new society, beating them at their own game. As Cartwright's character approaches, our hearts rise, thinking humanity still has a chance. Then Sutherland raises his arm, flares his nostrils, points his finger and screeches that awful screech as the camera zooms into the blackness of our former hero's throat. The screen goes black, followed by a pin-drop silent credits crawl. It's an astonishingly dark and terrifying sequence, both stunning and satisfying, and one that has assuredly contributed to the film's enduring appeal.

Despite positive reviews and respectable box office, *Invasion '78* was not a huge hit. Released December 20, 1978, it faced stiff competition from Richard Donner's *Superman and Every Which Way But Loose* with Clint Eastwood's *Hombre*. Its higher budgeted-on-video version eventually earning a separate but equal place of respect alongside its classic predecessor in the hearts of sci-fi horror fans.

Two decades later, producer Solo sensed the moment

was right to revisit Finney's universal themes. Unfortunately, the third time was decidedly not the charm.

Body Snatchers (1993)

"Where you gonna go? Where you gonna run? Where you gonna hide? Nowhere — because there's no one like you left."

Feeling the story could be revived for the current generation, Solo asked celebrated writer/director Larry Cohen (it's *Alive*, *The Stuff*) to come up with a new angle. He then approached Warner Bros. who jumped at the chance with a few conditions. In an interview with Tony Timpane, Solo revealed that after greenlighting the project, the studio demanded another writer (he implies that "Raymond Catshen, who received co-story credit with Cohen, may have been a front for someone else) and another executive — and then another.

"I was one of those night-marsh studio relationships," says Solo. After Re-Animator's Stuart Gordon and Dennis Paoli were hired to revise the screenplay, with Gordon signed to direct, the project quickly bogged down in development hell. "We had an executive he would see a movie, come back Monday and say, 'We have to stick this in ...' After nearly two years and a dozen different drafts, a stymied Gordon departed the project. Enter Abel Ferrara, the fiercely iconoclastic director of *The Driller Killer*, *The King of New York* and *Bad Lieutenant*. Ferrara and frequent writing partner Nicholas S. John then embarked

on yet another round of rewrites.

If it sounds like a lot of cooks, you'd be right. What at first glance looks like a genre dream team — unique, talented voices all — ultimately results in a mishmash of concepts with no clear vision. The finished film, while not a complete disaster, is a pale imitation of its forerunners, a dumbed-down version of Finney's story that assumes its audience already knows the story and heads straight for the shock scores. Set on an Alabama Army base, even the paranoid concept of who is human and who is not — arguably the crux of the novel — is abandoned in favor of bungled action sequences and sloppy, ill-fitted pod effects (again provided by Thomas Burman, with *body/partner* Brian Breiband-Burman).

For instance, Gabrielle Anwar's "Where do I begin?" voiceover informs us that a) this is a flashback, b) her character survives and c) that we will be following the story through her eyes. However, there are literally dozens of scenes that take place without Anwar around (nearly half the *snatchers* scene belongs to her on-screen father, Tony Kinney), with information transpiring that she is never privy to. Clearly a by-product of the endless script changes, it sets the slapdash tone that will follow for the remaining 87 minutes.



Hot off her tantalizing tango in *Scent of a Woman*, Anwar is fine as the ingenue, but lacks the presence of McCarthy or Sutherland. While the attempt to appeal to a younger audience, or tap into the time-honored motif of "no one believes us kids" is recognized, Ferrara's choice for his central protagonist is an unfortunately lightweight, if attractive, one. Capable performers such as Meg Tilly, R. Lee Ermey and Forest Whitaker are given little to do, and by the time weird child Christine Eise and sensitive soldier Billy With are introduced, it's clear we're a long way from Finney-land.

While potential cinematic mileage exists in the concept of alien invaders infiltrating our military, calling soldiers "mindless drones following orders" is too easy an allegorical target, and even so, nothing is done with it. But even more troubling is the lack of mystery. Tilly's human body collapses in front of her son (and us), so we know she's a pod before we even hit the 30-minute mark. Likewise, we see the soldiers harvesting pods out of the swamp, so we know there's a conspiracy. The transformed duplicates communicate via "evil" speech cadences, such that the difference could not go without notice. (Note: Creepy Meg Tilly is not nearly as effective as reasonable Leonard Nimoy.) And why the hell do the pod people disintegrate upon being shot and killed? Because someone wanted slimy melting alien deaths, that's why.

But wait, there's more. The duplicates seem more vegetable than human, bleeding green blood and shunning alcohol, become since they are supposed to duplicate humans perfectly. Whitaker's twitzy pil-popping historian (as do not play, nor do his pod-directed veggie-insults. Crowds of pod people screaming well before the base is secure? Soldiers with rifles randomly shooting at their comrades? Kinney's completely inexplicable transformation? Or how about the unintentionally hilarious sequence of Anwar's little brother attacking With in the helicopter, topped by the awful muted shot of him pointing skyward and pod-screaming as he falls to earth? Then somehow With and Anwar are flying around, blowing up fleets of pod-filled trucks (and the entire base) with a single chopper? Um, where did...? How did...? Oh, never mind.

Not to say that the film doesn't have a few bright moments. The reverse motion pod-spaghetti attacks are effective enough, as are the half-formed albino podgathers. We are also treated to several topless shots of Gabrielle Anwar and Tilly's body double "Jennifer," which doesn't hurt. (In a Sept 2007 post on her website, the actress dispels the long-held myth that sister Jennifer Tilly was her stand-in.)

Over budget and over schedule, *Body Snatchers* premiered at the 1993 Cannes Film Festival, then opened in the US in January 1994 to decidedly mixed reviews and poor box office, with Ferrara and Solo publicly blaming each other and Warner executives for compromising the film. Despite everything, it still maintains a number of loyal fans who enjoy it for the schlocky thrill ride it is.

For a decade, the odd peeps from the pods were DVD releases, delighting aficionados and introducing the films to new generations of fans. But in March 2004, over-producer Joel Silver and Warner Bros. hired first-time screenwriter David Kajganich to script a new version of the Finney novel. Was the world ready to be snatched again?

Invasion, The (2007)

"In the night situation, we are all capable of the most terrible crimes. To imagine a world where this was not so... Well, this is to imagine a world where human beings cease to be human."

Plagued by highly publicized reshoots, ballooning budgets, on-set accidents (star Nicole Kidman broke several ribs during the shoot) and an indifferent critical and public reception upon its August 2007 release, it is easy to simply dismiss *Downfall* director Oliver Hirshbiegel's version of the classic tale as an ill-conceived disaster. However, upon closer examination, there are worthy aspects that

shine through the Hollywood muddle, leading one to wonder what might have been.

The story begins with a space shuttle crash in Virginia—a strange spore-like substance found coating the debris. CDC official Jeremy Northington prods his finger upon a bit of wreckage, inadvertently becoming "patient zero." The transformed Northington then orchestrates a media scare over a new strain of flu (for which he just happens to have the "vaccine"). Meanwhile, psychiatrist Carol Bennell (Kidman) notices that her patients—one of them played by *Invasion* 78's Veronica Cartwright—are experiencing paranoid delusions that those closest to them have changed. As the condition spreads, peace begins breaking out all over the world, with long-standing political rivalries abating as the pods seize power.

This is a fascinating concept playing upon one originally verbalized in Finney's text about the human condition being predisposed toward pain and violence. Would it not be better to eliminate troublesome emotions and be truly united, as our evolved species should be? Another marvelous innovation is that the alien cells infect their hosts at the genetic level, eliminating any need for surreptitiously placed pods. Introduce a few spores into any liquid, offer your friend a drink, and voila—one more team member. If they're not thirsty, you can always projectile vomit into their mouth. (Yes, this happens.) When someone tries to wake a sleeping individual during the transformation, the host dies of a cardiac arrest. Bascally, if you are infected and fall asleep, you're pretty much screwed.

This is solid, well-conceived material, and a better film should have resulted from it. Unfortunately, the studio-imposed, Wachowski Brothers-scripted reshoots injected more action-based scenes (directed by an uncredited James McTeigue) that too often tried to cliché car chase scenarios (springing tires, multiple crashes, car in flames, dozens of pod people hanging onto it, etc.) The cast, including newly-tapped 007 Daniel Craig and Jeffrey Wright, do their best, but there are too many story contrivances and easy resolutions for any real drama to resonate. The climax turns on whether a vaccine can be derived from Kidman's conveniently immune son. But if the

aliens have already assumed power on a global level, who is going to convince them to take Wright's 11th hour antidote? Aren't we're talking about a drawn-out decades-long conflict, with humans vs. pods firing fluids back and forth at each other? Yet, in the blink of a popcorn denouement, all is right as rain, with countries happily back to war—tragically considering the intellectual ore to be mined. A success neither critically nor financially, *The Invasion* reaped a worldwide theatrical gross of \$40 million, only half its estimated \$80 million budget.

Epilogue

"You read these occasional queer stones... And this much I know. Some of them—some of them—are true."

With that, we conclude our retrospective of cinematic pod people 55 years have passed since Kevin McCarthy first burst through that hospital door, begging us to believe his wild tale, and audiences are still compelled to listen. In Dean Koontz's introduction to the book, *They're Here: Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, A Tribute, he explains, "One of the greatest strengths of Jack Finney's work is his ability to describe and explore complex emotions in an admirably low-key fashion [...]. This is why his work is well suited to film—fundamentally an emotional medium. Fear, joy, loneliness, longing... Finney had a way with this material, and that was a gift of gold." There's a reason five decades of filmmakers have continued to revisit and riff on the author's seminal story about menace from the sky that looks like the guy next door: It's an imminently good scary bedtime story, one that leaves us wondering if we'll still be us in the morning.

Nighty-night, true believers... ★





Halloween Theme Park Haunts Across America



by Jason Nigella

We may take them for granted now, but before Knott's brought the haunt 39 years ago with Knott's Scary Farm, there were no theme park Halloween events. Now, theme parks across the globe are bringing horror to their guests even countries that do not celebrate the dark holiday are using October to enjoy some horror, gore, and gruesome fun. Not all parks are out to terrify you... Disney (obviously) and many others tend to keep it light for the whole

family. However, most of these parks are out to infest your brain with their newer, creepier, and more gut-wrenching offerings every year. And, many of them do it very, very well. The following is a list of theme parks with Halloween celebrations (with a focus on a few) — even a theme park that is entirely about the macabre. Pack a bag and hit the road, but beware — after visiting a few of these, a quiet break in a padded cell may be in your future.

Magic Screams at Magic Springs

Past events have included a haunted house, a haunted Wild West trail, a trick-or-treat trail, a Creature Feature show, and spooky hayride, plus a scare-free zone for younger kids that has pumpkin painting and more. (Hot Springs, AR)

Knott's Scary Farm

Knott's Scary Farm (located at Knott's Berry Farm) is the oldest, one of the biggest, and arguably one the best theme park haunted attractions. In Knott's three scare zones (ComeEvil!, Necropolis and Ghost Town) guests encounter monsters, zombies and madmen. Costuming and special effects are top notch. (Buena Park, CA)

Halloween Time at Disneyland

Kid-friendly Halloween events for the whole family. The parks and the characters will be decked in Halloween. Disneyland will transform its classic Haunted Mansion attraction with a Halloween-meets-Christmas theme, by overlaying the characters from Tim Burton's *A Nightmare Before Christmas*. The park will also reprise Space Mountain Ghost Galaxy, a re-themed ride on the classic coaster. Also, Disney's California Adventure's Twilight Zone Tower of Terror will be accessorized for the season. (Anheim, CA)

Brick-or-Treat Trail

at Legoland California

Halloween features will include in-park trick-or-treating on their two "Brick-or-Treat" trails, live music, costume contests for kids and a dance party. (Carlsbad, CA)

Halloween Haunt and Snoopy's Costume Party

California's Great America brings on the gore with its separate nighttime Halloween Haunt. Haunted mazes will include Werewolf Canyon and Club Blood, while scare zones such as Dead Man's Cove and Underworld Alley will keep guests screaming outside



the mazes. During the day, Planet Snoopy becomes Planet Spooky and features family-friendly fun. Kids 12 and under can trick-or-treat in costume for goodies along with the Peanut But. (Santa Clara, CA)

Halloween Spooktacular at Sea World San Diego

SeaWorld will present special shows, treats and family fun at its G-rated event. Kids are welcome to come in costume. (San Diego, CA)

SPOTLIGHT:

Fright Fest at Six Flags St. Louis

Six Flags morphs into a shadow land of ghosts and ghouls. Roller coasters become Six Flags morphs into a shadow land of ghosts and ghouls. Roller coasters become Six Flags morphs into a shadow land of ghosts and ghouls. There are plenty of thrills for the whole family during the day. Kids can enjoy rides such as Dr. Fright's Freakout, Love at First Flight and so many more.

As the sun sets at Six Flags St. Louis the ghouls start to come out. If you dare, try out one of the haunted excursions such as The Slaughter House, Haunted Hayride or the Terror Train. The Legend Continues. Nightly shows, Las Vegas Comedy Hypnotists Steve Daly, Juggler Tommy Drake, a Battle of the Bands are all part of the fun too. (Eureka, MO)



FrightFest at Elitch Gardens

Elitch Gardens offers two haunted houses: The Suffering and Bloodlust. Shows will include Rock the Dead and DJ Ghoul and the Gang. Give the Wheel of Misfortune a spin and you may end up eating live bugs.

Younger kids can get some sweets at Elitch's Trick-or-Treat Trail and enjoy other daytime tormented activities. (Denver, CO)

Haunted Graveyard

at Lake Compounce

A total of 22 attractions including haunted houses, trails, scare zones, and of course, a haunted graveyard. Among the scares are Zombie Forest,

Mayan Temple and the Slaughter House. A portion of the proceeds from Lake Compounce's haunted events goes to diabetes research. (Bristol, CT)

Howl-O-Scream at Busch Gardens

At night, this park goes dark in all the right places. Without a licensed "gimmick" to back it, this may be one of the best non-"theme" haunts in the country, thanks to its volume in haunts. (Tampa, FL)

SeaWorld's Halloween Spooktacular

G-rated family fun. No gore, just low-impact Halloween fun with trick-or-treating (for "see sweet's"), walk-around characters and special entertainment. Kids can come in costume. (Orlando, FL)

Phobia and Kid-o-ween

at Wild Adventures

Phobia haunted attractions will include Buried Alive, Attacked by Maygots, and Kidnapped by Inbreds. (Yes... inbreds.) Kid-o-ween offers family

fun such as a hay maze, arts and crafts and a Monster Mash Dance Party. Kids are encouraged to come in costume for trick-or-treating. (Valdosta, GA)

ValleySCARE at Valleyfair

Haunts include The Mangler Asylum and CamEvil. ValleySCARE will also feature Blood Creek Cemetery, a haunted zone. Shows include The Boogie Monsters and the Madness and Mayhem Show. For younger kids, the park will offer Pumpkin Hollow with a trick-or-treat trail and other scare-free activities. (Shakopee, MN)

Fright Fest at

Six Flags Magic Mountain

and Fright Fest at Discovery Kingdom

Fright Fest (at all locations) features haunted mazes, scare zones, hypnotists and demented clowns. Some coasters are run backwards and indoor coasters are in total dark. Events for the kids are also offered... "Twick or Twel" (thanks to Bugs Bunny) and "Scaryoke."

(Valencia/Vallejo, CA)

Also: Six Flags Parks located in Denver, CO; Lincolnshire, NY; Aachen, GA; Mitchellville, MD; Appleton, MA; Greenburg, NY and San Antonio, TX.

Mickey's Not-So-Scary

Halloween Party

Mickey hosts a Halloween party for the young and young at heart. No gore, just Mickey and the gang offering trick-or-treaters some goodies, a Halloween-themed Boo-to-You parade, storytelling, a special Happy HalloWishes fireworks presentation, and selected Magic Kingdom rides, such as the entirely appropriate Haunted Mansion. Kids (and adults, if they so choose) are encouraged to come in costume to Mickey's Party. (Orlando, FL)



Xtro (1983): One of the creatures in this film was portrayed by a mime, who was hired to crawl on his back (the creature's face was a mask on the back of the actor's head).

Halloween Hunt and Howl-O-Fest at Worlds of Fun
Hard-core gore is offered in two haunts ... BloodShed and Corn Stalkers. For younger kids, the park offers Magical House on Boo Hill, a not-so-haunted house, a kids costume contest, and Snoopy's Big Treasure Hunt. (Kansas City, MO)

Fright Dome at Adventureland
Among their five haunted houses is one themed to the Saw films. The park is packed with scare zones and other attractions, including magic shows. (Las Vegas, NV)

ScreenFest at Canobie Lake Park
The screams include haunts Dead Shed and The Village, as well as an assortment of shows, including Circus of the Strange, Monster Bash, and a nightly Monster Parade. Canobie Lake also presents Pumpkin Palace for family entertainment, which will include storytelling and other low-scary activities. (Salem, NH)

FrightFest at Darien Lake
Darien Lake will offer CamVile (a haunted graveyard of old amusement park rides), the Manic Mansion (haunted house) and Fright Night Field Trip (a haunted trail). Darien Lake also presents Crazy Cliffs Twisted Nightmares - a magic and freak show. Younger kids can get some sweets at Darien Lake's Trick-or-Treat Trail and enjoy a corn maze, pumpkin painting and other fun in BooVille. (Darien Center, NY)

Halloween Horror Nights at Universal Studios

One of the greatest haunts in the country - Halloween Horror Nights are amping up the scares this year with an all-new maze inspired by the upcoming *The Thing* prequel (they featured an amazing haunt in past years based on the '80s feature, see photo below). Universal often deals directly with the studios and/or directors of various hit films to produce some of the best theme haunts around. In the past they have produced haunts for *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and even *Dead Silence*. On top of top-notch haunts, you will not find another theme park in the country who employs more scare-masters to help make this show's gears run! Outside of *The Thing*, Universal also plans on unleashing a haunt from the mind of Eli Roth, based on the *Hostel* film series! From September 23 through October 31st, this is one of the best haunts around! (Universal City, CA and Orlando, FL)



Nights of Horror at Luna Park Coney Island
Nights of Horror will feature a haunted maze and monsters roaming throughout the park. (Brooklyn, NY)

Scarowinds at Carowinds

Haunts will include Camp Kibouze and Last Laft 3-D. The park will also present Bed-to-the-Bone and other shows. Geared to younger kids, Howl-O-Fest will offer a hay maze, a costume parade and other milder Halloween fun. (Charlotte, NC)

HalloWeekends at Cedar Point
This year marks the 16th anniversary of HalloWeekends and features a number of fright zones (six total), four haunted houses and live shows, mixed with thrilling coasters and rides - as well as weekend monster-themed parades. Tombstones, cobwebs, skeletons, pumpkins and hundreds of spiders, bats and other yet-to-be-identified creatures litter this park's event. (Sandusky, OH)

Halloween Hunt at Kings Island
The popular King's Island park located just outside of Cincinnati turns to the dark side every haunting season with after-dark haunts and scare zones placed in every possible location throughout with running coasters and rides at night. Extra late hours assure as many haunts can be experienced as possible. (Cincinnati, OH)

FrightFest at Frontier City
FrightFest at Frontier City includes the Nightmare haunted house and the Rick the Dead show

for adults. The park also offers a trick-or-treat trail, pumpkin decorating and other fun activities in BooVile for younger guests. (Oklahoma City, OK)

Halloween Hunt and BooBlast at Dorney Park
Haunted attractions include CornStalkers and Club Blood, as well as the Fangs 'n' Franks Show. For family-friendly haunted fun, the park offers BooBlast with scare-free activities. (Allentown, PA)

Hersheypark in the Dark
Who knows more about trick-or-treating than Hershey? This event offers activities such as costume contests, shows (such as Bunsen and the Bunsens) and trick-or-treating. At the adjacent ZooAmerica, guests can bring flashlights to observe the nocturnal habits of animals at Creatures of the Night. (Hershey, PA)

Hallowboof at Idlewild
Idlewild's Halloween celebrations will feature trick-or-treating, themed rides, shows and walk-through mazes - all of which are entirely family friendly. (Ligonier, PA)

Phantom Fright Nights at Kennywood
Kennywood gets creepy with Halloween features such as the haunted mazes, Villa of the Vampires and Morbid Manor and scare zones including Kennyville Cemetery. (West Mifflin, PA)

Lake Winnepesaukee at Lake Winnepesaukee
Lake Winnepesaukee is kid and family fun. Events offer a parade, magic show and other Halloween fun. (Chattanooga, TN)

Howl-O-Scream at SeaWorld
SeaWorld San Antonio offers hard-core scare zones and haunted mazes, such as Jack's Frightmare Forest, and family-friendly activities, such as Countdown to Halloween with Elmo and Friends, for kids. (San Antonio, TX)

Screams
Screams is much, much more than a haunted attraction - it's an entire Halloween theme park complete with five major attractions that you can tour as many times as you like, scores of professional actors, activities, food and drink and games. Besides the haunts, the park has games, scary-oke, classic horror movies, face painting, psychics, a fortune teller and more. Screams is a night of fun and gasping terror. (Waukegan, IL)

Howl-O-Scream at Busch Gardens
Haunted mazes include Blüen and The Hunted. Howl-O-Scream also features great shows, including Monster Stamp Revamped and Jack is Back. For the kids, Busch Gardens offers Sesame Street Forest of Fun and other activities. (Williamsburg, VA)

Haunt at Kings Dominion
High-gore haunts include The Doll Factory and The Asylum. Shows include Overlord's Resurrection and Disturbia. BooBlast offers toned-down fun and mild haunts for kids and families. (Dorset, VA)

FrightFest at Wild Waves
Wild Waves' FrightFest features the Screen Factory haunted house, Halloween shows and the BooVile trick-or-treat area for younger kids. (Federal Way, WA)

Haunted Night at Mt. Olympus
Scare zones, a hay-bale maze, and Wisconsin's largest haunted house are the highlights of the event. Come in costume! (Wisconsin Dells, WI)

Frightmares at Lagoon Park
Frightmares' Haunted houses include Lockdown and Psycho Dave's Salvage Yard. For the kids, Lagoon offers the notorious Spook-A-Boo Walk-Thru. (Farmington, UT)







A HorrorHound Tribute to The Thing • by Jeff Rebner

HorrorHound
Tribute to The Thing
by Jeff Rebner

REMEMBERING

FROM HOWARD HAWKS
TO JOHN CARPENTER
60 YEARS LATER

THE THING

HORRORHOUND RETROSPECTIVE
BY JON KITLEY

One of the most elusive of human qualities, going back to the beginning of our existence, is that of trust. Who can we really trust? Is this person on my side, or just saying so for their personal gain? Is this person I'm talking to really who they say they are? Is this person I'm talking to really what they say they are? This uncertainty has been explored thousands, even tens of thousands of times on the silver screen. And if we introduce a situation and/or location where characters are isolated with only a few other people to rely on, it makes those questions even tougher to deal with. Not to mention scarier. We don't even have to be talking about a horror movie here – it could be a political thriller, a spy movie, or a prison drama. These elements can haunt any story and create for its characters anguish, depression, paranoia, and most of all... fear.

In August 1938, a story simply entitled "Who Goes There?" was published in the magazine *Astounding Science Fiction* under the name Don A. Stuart. This was a pseudonym for John W. Campbell, the new editor of the publication. Campbell, a lifelong fan of science fiction, had started writing at an early age – his first story, "When the Atome Failed," was published in 1930, when he was only 19 years old. As editor of *Astounding Science Fiction*, a position he would hold until his death in 1971, he resolved to make a change in the genre, forcing writers to fit certain parameters of quality if they wanted to be featured in the magazine.

Isaac Asimov said that Campbell "demanded that science-fiction writers understand science and understand people," requirements that many writers, even established ones, had trouble meeting. Campbell wanted to challenge the status quo, to change what science fiction could be, and over time, he did just that.

According to Asimov, Campbell was "the most powerful force in science fiction ever, and for the first 10 years of editorship he dominated the field completely."

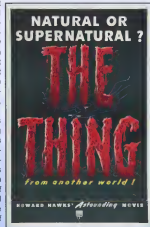
"Who Goes There?" deals with a group of scientists in an Antarctic research facility that discover a crashed spaceship, frozen in the ice for

millions of years. They also unearth an occupant from the craft, and almost instantly, a schism forms within the group as to what to do with this new find. Some of the crew wants to throw it out for study, while others worry about the

possibility of a deadly virus or contaminant that could come from the remains. Others hypothesize it could still be alive. There is also desampling regarding the nature of the alien. Because of the aggressive look on its face and in its (three) red eyes, some of the team suppose it to be a harmful or threatening creature while the others rebuke these thoughts, saying, "Just because its nature is different, you haven't any right to say it's necessarily evil." As the debates begin, so does the division of interests and control. Once the creature is thawed, and discovered to still be alive, the terror begins. And as the true nature of this extraterrestrial is revealed, it gets even worse.

According to Campbell, the aim of his story was to impart the feeling of "inescapable tension and fear brooding in the Antarctic camp." When the men discover that the alien, or even a small part of it, can take over any one of the inhabitants of the camp, looking and acting exactly like that person, paranoia sets in. The title of the story immediately comes

into play, with all of the characters thinking "Is the man next to me an inhuman monster? Who do I trust? And who do I believe?" This doubt in those around us, especially if one's life is at stake, is one of the greatest fears a person could have (a theme that would be used again in Jack Finney's 1954 story, "The Body Snatchers," and its subsequent movie adaptations). A group of people forced to band together and battle a monster is one thing. But not knowing just who the monster is



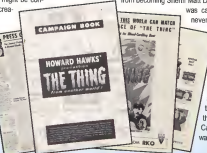


something different all together. And even more frightening when the group of people are all looking at each other with that same condemning stare. Even if you are still human, the person next to you might be convinced otherwise, thinking that YOU are the creature ... and need to be disposed of.

In the late '40s, Howard Hawks, one of Hollywood's top directors, purchased the rights to Campbell's story, feeling the time was right for a science-fiction monster movie. The project eventually became *The Thing from Another World*, but for some reason, Hawks decided not to direct. This could have been because of some uneasiness expressed by the studio, or perhaps he just wasn't sure about taking a chance on this type of picture. Instead, he presented his long-time editor, Christian Nyby, with the opportunity of earning his first directing credit.

It. Hawks' decision started a debate amongst movie fans that has been discussed and argued since the film was released. The movie has all the telltale markings of a "Howard Hawks" effort - the overlapping dialogue, a central storyline about a group of people bonding together to fight for the common good, and many other attributes. There are plenty of reported accounts that while Nyby might have been calling "Action" and "Cut," Hawks was the one running the show. According to actor William Serf, Hawks was always on-set watching rehearsals. Once a scene had finished rehearsing, Nyby would confer with Hawks for a bit, then approach the actors to share "his" thoughts with what was good and what needed to be changed. Plus, if Nyby was truly at the helm, then why did the rest of his directorial output lack the staying power of his first feature? (This would not be the last time the question would arise as to who really directed a picture. Just look at Steven Spielberg's ... sorry ... Tobe Hooper's *Polegust*.)

At first, Hawks wanted to follow Campbell's original story and make the creature something that audiences had never seen before. The early drafts of



trying to conceive a design that would meet with Hawks' approval - after 18 sculptures, he eventually succeeded. Actor James Amess, still a couple of years from becoming Sheriff Matt Dillon in the long-running TV series *Gunslinger*, was cast to play the titular menace. (Amess was never a fan of the movie, thinking his character looked like "a giant canot.")

But the creature wasn't the only "thing" to differ from the original story. For some reason, the film's action was relocated to the other side of the world, from Antarctica to the North Pole. Also, when the team first arrives at the crash site, they attempt to determine the outline of the ship. As they slowly spread out, they realize (as do we) that it is a large circle ... a flying saucer. In Campbell's story, on the other hand, the craft was shaped more like a submarine.

More significantly, the central theme of Campbell's tale lies in the uncertainty of not knowing who we can trust or who among us might be the monster. However, in *The Thing from Another World*, we know who the enemy is right from the beginning. From the first appearance of the creature, we also know it doesn't seem too interested in interplanetary peace talks. (To be fair, it probably didn't help matters that the soldier who first sees the creature shoots at it before running out of the room screaming.) Every time the alien appears on-screen, it is presented as hostile. One scene that still works today occurs when a door is opened to reveal the creature standing right there, ready to strike. The rumor is that nobody else in the cast besides actor Kenneth Tobey knew what was about to happen when the door was opened.

There are a few other little nods or hints from Campbell's story in Hawks' film, mostly found within the characters' conversations. There is speculation as to whether the other-worldly foreigner can read minds or get inside people's heads while they are sleeping, planting images that they might later remember as dreams. This notion is briefly discussed by two soldiers as they keep watch over the block of ice containing the alien Popsicle.

Another element from the original story is introduced when the team first returns to base. As they debate over what to do with the ice-encased specimen, different ideas and concerns are voiced by the scientists. In the film, however, only the briefest dialogue occurs before the military steps in with the dictum that nobody is doing anything





with this prize until they hear back from headquarters. This is not the first or last time where the military will exert its authority over the operation either. For example, when the reporter Scooty (Douglas Spencer) wants to break the news of finding the flying saucer, he's told he must wait until clearance is granted.

In typical Hawks fashion, the group of men band together to battle this common enemy. Within that theme, Hawks also gives us an internal struggle between the army and the scientists that want to study the creature. These scientists aren't necessarily presented as evil here, but rather interest-

was just a little misguided. Even so, it's no wonder audiences don't care for the guy and were glad when he (almost) got what was coming to him in the end. Besides siding with the monster, Carrington is arrogant, snobbish, and doesn't seem to care about the loss of the lives of the people around him, even his fellow scientists. According to him, "knowledge is more important than life."

Paul Frees plays Dr. Voorhees, another one of the scientists in the facility. Older TV fans might not recognize this actor's face, but his voice should ring a bell, even if they can't exactly

place it. Frees was a huge



ed in making a connection with what they believe to be an advanced and intelligent life form. As the character of Dr. Arthur Carrington (played by Robert Combs) says, "There are no enemies in science, only phenomena to study."

Perhaps in keeping with its Cold War setting, the film definitely shows that the army is in charge. Sure, they might not know exactly what they are doing, nor the right way to do it (as in the case of trying to salvage the spaceship), but they are the ones calling the shots. The worthy cast fills a wide range of characters. For the military, Captain Hendry (Tobey) is all about following orders and trying to keep the people under his command safe. His men stick together to fight for the common good, serious when they need to be, but able to laugh and even make jokes about what is going on. One might start to wonder if Hendry can make a single decision without hearing from his superiors, but when the trouble starts, he is right there taking charge. And even though he might not agree with some of the scientists, he is smart enough to take their help when offered.

On the other side of the table, Carrington leads the scientist team. He believes this alien visitor to be superior to humans and that they "owe it to the brain of our species to stand here and die... without destroying a source of wisdom." Once Carrington reveals himself to be more concerned about the alien life form than the lives of his co-workers, he is deemed just as much of a monster as the creature from space. In an earlier draft of the screenplay, Carrington met a grisly end, his head violently ripped off by the alien just before it is destroyed itself. At this point, Scooty was to declare, "Both monsters are dead." But this was eventually altered to show that maybe Carrington

name in voice work, especially in cartoons, serving as the voice of *The Bullwinkle Show's* Boris Badenov and countless other characters over the years. He also provided 'narration' for dozens of sci-fi horror movies, such as *The Deadly Manies* (1957), *The Monolith Monsters* (1957), *Burn, Witch, Burn* (1962), as well as dubbing the English-language versions of several Godzilla movies.

Once the creature escapes from the compound into the snowy wasteland, we only see it when it is ready to attack. The team discovers they can detect when it's getting close by using a Geiger counter, so they can at least be prepared. The odds are still against them though: bullets have already proved ineffective, and soon it is revealed, after the sled dogs attack and nip off one of its arms, that the monster can grow back appendages. Ultimately, the men resolve to burn, then electrocute their interstellar enemy. The fire stunt sequence, especially for the time, is nothing short of incredible. Veteran stuntman Tom Steele was dressed in the creature costume, wearing an asbestos suit with a fiberglass helmet underneath, which fed him oxygen from a tank. As Steele broke into the room, he was doused with kerosene and then set ablaze. Then, as if that wasn't enough, yet another bucket of kerosene was tossed on him. Had any of the oxygen he was breathing hit an open flame, it would have fired his lungs with fire.

One aspect that helps immeasurably with the mood and feel of any horror film is the music. Having previously worked with composer Dimitri Tiomkin on two occasions, Hawks hired him to create the score for this latest endeavor. Tiomkin was a Russian emigrant who began playing the piano at a very early age, hitting the Russian stages as a child pianist prodigy. He moved to Berlin for a short time before coming to the US, and soon started composing music for the movies. In his career, he scored over 130

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films and received 16 Oscar nominations, winning four times. While he primarily wrote music for mainstream dramas, westerns and musicals, he also scored a few thrillers, including three films for Alfred Hitchcock, most notably *Strangers on a Train*. The score he gave us for *The Thing* from Another World is pure '50s monster music and enjoyable every second of the way, with loud blaring horns and even a Theremin to create a weird, unworldly soundscape. Tiomkin's music blends perfectly into the movie, highlighting what we are watching on screen.

While maybe not as effective today due to modern audiences being spoiled with action-filled monster movies, Hawks' film still holds its own as one of the first alien-from-space movies. Sure, the creature is more like a Frankenstein monster than what we might have expected from another world, but you just never know. As Scotty, the newspaper reporter, says in the movie, "An intellectual carrot. The mind boggles." But more importantly, this film provided – no – **WARNED** audiences with a very important message: "Keep watching the skies!"

The Ultimate in Alien Terror

In the mid-'70s, television producer Stuart Cohen read the Campbell story and thought it would be a great idea for a remake. He was planning on using a young director that he had met at USC. That director was John Carpenter. But as often happens in the film business, due to schedules, budgets, public interest, etc., it just "wasn't the right time for the project." Several years later, Cohen revisited the idea, by which point Carpenter had proven himself a viable talent with a string of moneymaking films. It also proba-



bly helped that Ridley Scott's *Alien* was such a huge success, and sci-fi was the hot Hollywood ticket.

Carpenter had always been a huge fan of both Howard Hawks and his cinematic output, basically remaking *Rio Bravo* for his second feature film, *Assault on Precinct 13*. In fact, as a little acknowledgement to his most admired director, he edited "Assault" under the pseudonym John T. Chance – the name of John Wayne's character in *Rio Bravo*. In his mega-hit *Halloween*, Carpenter had a scene featuring two kids watching Hawks' *The Thing* from Another World on TV. Perhaps a little glimpse of what was to come?

While preparing his updated version, Carpenter expressed a strong desire to go back to the original story and dazzle audiences with an entirely original, never-before-seen monster. Artist Dale Kuipers was hired to come up with conceptual design drawings of this new alien. Kuipers' vision was more insect or bug-like and while they bore some similarities to images conjured by Campbell's original story, they were also quite different. Carpenter liked the designs that he saw and hired Rob Bottin to bring them to life.

Having trained under Rick Baker, Bottin was a 24-year-old special makeup effects artist who had already begun to make a name for himself at a very young age. He was only 19 when he was called upon to create the effects for Joe Dante's *Pranah*. A year later, he was working with Carpenter on *The Fog*, not only doing the makeup but also playing the lead ghost, Blake. His next learning with Dante, 1981's *The Howling*, was where fans really started to take notice, as Bottin's creative and imaginative talents exploded off the screen. With his stunning on-camera man-to-wolf transformations, Bottin proved to audiences and directors that there was no end to his skills. It was then no wonder that Carpenter chose to bring Bottin onboard for his version of Hawks' sci-fi classic.

While Bottin liked the concepts that Kuipers had come up with, he thought it still resembled something close to H.R. Giger's design for *Alien*. Bottin



Bad Taste (1987): All of the alien masks featured throughout *Bad Taste* were created by Peter Jackson – who made them in his mother's kitchen, utilizing her oven for hardening the latex.



wanted to create something that would emulate the film's title, truly a "thing," one that could look like anything that it had encountered over its lifetime. It could change, shape-shift, mutate ... anything. Bottin did not want to do a man-in-a-suit because he felt modern audiences expected more. Though Kuipers was asked to stay on board as a designer and sculptor, he declined as he felt Bottin's ideas were too far removed from his original vision. Bottin moved forward, collaborating with artist Mike Ploog, who had made his name working for Marvel Comics in the early '70s, and Roy Arbogast, who was in charge of the mechanical effects. Cinematographer Dean Cundey also returned to work with Carpenter, their fourth straight feature together. With this formidable crew assembled, they set out to achieve the impossible and bring to life the unthinkable. Just 28 minutes into *The Thing*, as a dog's face peels back off its head, the "monster movie" was changed forever.

Like Hawks before him, there were aspects from the original story that Carpenter and writer Bill Lancaster (son of Burt) kept while others were altered. Though the original story featured quite a

large roster of characters, as did Hawks' version, Carpenter had only 12 main cast members, many of them given names from the original story. It should also be noted that there are no women in the cast (unless you count the computer chess voice, provided by Carpenter's then-wife Adrienne Barbeau), a decision for which the director would receive some negative feedback. This was also the first time that Carpenter had marshaled such a large number of principal actors on a set all at once. For the 1951 film, Hawks and Nyby were cramming tons of people into a single shot, sometimes getting more than 30 actors in frame. While Carpenter's cast was much smaller, it still presented a worthy challenge.

Another element that came from the original story was the concept of the creature being an "imitator." As the original title suggests, it is a mystery. These characters don't know if the person sitting next to them is really that person ... or a perfect imitation plotting to take them over as well. Even with all the special monster effects removed, the basic elements of the movie would still work: individuals growing more and more paranoid, questioning each other, eventually converging into a showdown



THE THING ABOUT JOHN CARPENTER BY JASON HIGNITE

HorrorFond: *The Thing* was not really well received initially.

John Carpenter: Hated ... hated. Not just "not well received" — intensely disliked, especially by fans.

HH: Which is ironic, because now it's so loved.

JC: [chuckles] You think it's ironic? You should have been me then. I didn't think it was "ironic" in those days. I got fired out of a movie because of that reaction.

HH: No way! Which film?

JC: Well ... never mind ... [chuckles] ... It was a Universal film. [pauses] I was going to do *Finsterling*. I had a big budget — and they canned my cast. Threw me out. I was out of a job. I was unemployed.

HH: Well, I wonder how that guy [the one who made that decision] feels, knowing now who you have become.

JC: They probably don't feel any different.

HH: So now, *The Thing* is this beloved film. What is your reaction to that? It does what it does, and now it's this enormous thing that everybody loves.

JC: If *The Thing* had been loved like it is today, my career would have been different. But, it wasn't. So, you've gotta play the cards you're dealt. I am very, very proud of *The Thing*. It's one of my favorite movies I have ever done. I am really happy people

are digging it now. It's great.

HH: What were some of the biggest challenges you faced while shooting the film?

JC: Snow ... special effects. The actors were great — they really came "ready." It was an ensemble cast, and there were a couple of times I had to deal with ... what was it? 12 or 14 of them, all in one shot. That was the first time I had done that. I had to talk to a couple of guys about how to direct an ensemble of actors. I learned a lot of stuff from them. But ... snow and special effects ... and the flares that we used. Especially is the last part of the movie when they were going down to check the generator — that orange, flares? Well, those things, they sucked your lungs up. I held it ... I would hold one off screen occasionally to light something. They kinda burned your hand. It just wasn't fun. And, the cold. We shot on a glacier — it was miserable.

HH: How much did the cold affect the special effects?

JC: They weren't there. They weren't anywhere near there ... so you kidding me? [laughs] Bob Bottin in the cold? That wouldn't have happened. No ... he's a diva. He gets a special studio built for him and his special effects, and we crew assholes are up there on the glacier killing ourselves.

HH: But you did have a refrigerated studio? Not quite as cold as a glacier — I am sure.

Mac and Me (1988): Okay ... okay ... we know it's not a horror film. But how can you do a timeline of sci-fi aliens and not include the "so bad, it's bad" alien M.A.C. from this feature-length McDonald's commercial?

between the survivors isolated in the middle of the Antarctic, trapped inside a little commune with deadly freezing temperatures right outside the walls, could one ask for a more perfect setting to create a visceral atmosphere of claustrophobia and mistrust?

All the while, the men are searching for clues as to who this alien imposter might be. Or could there be more than one? This notion is explored to perfection in one particular sequence: In Campbell's story, the team develops a blood test to determine who has been infected by this alien parasite, a component that Carpenter insisted on having in his version. As MacReady prepares to put the hot wire into each petri dish of blood, we are as anxious as the on-screen characters to find out what is going to happen. Is this really going to work? If it does, what is going to happen? And who is it going to be the Thing?

As mentioned earlier, in the 1951 production we knew right from the beginning who the "bad guy" was. But with the remake, like the original story, we never knew who the alien is until it is forced to show its true face (or faces, as the case may be) due to being injured or cornered by inhabitants of the camp. Even during filming, the actors themselves oftentimes were unaware as to when they had been infected by the creature and were no longer human, since most of the effects were added in later, after the actors had already filmed their sequences reacting to "something" in front of them. Watching the film today, fans often try to figure out just when someone becomes the monster right along with the characters on screen,



which can lead to some fun discussions. But even Carpenter has admitted that you can't really tell, because he sometimes didn't know himself.

During the Norm's heart attack sequence, Botin and company again display their passion to put their crazy imaginations on display for the audience's benefit. Not only do we see the chest top open to reveal a large mouth full of sharp teeth, but we also bear witness to a creature exploding out of that body looking like something from a twisted nightmare. As Norm's head slowly detaches from his neck, slides off the table to the floor, uses its tongue to pull itself along, then sprouts spider legs in order to escape, it is not just David Clennon's character Palmer saying, "You've got to be fucking kidding," but everyone in the audience as well.

The characters in this snowy seclusion are also quite different between the two films. In Hawks' version,

besides the occasional pesky scientist, everyone is on the same team, united to fight the good fight against their common enemy. Other than a little squabble here or there, everyone seems to get along. But Carpenter presents a group of people out in the middle of nowhere either deliberately seeking isolation, or forced into it. These characters are not "shiny happy people" but rather outcasts from polite society. Sure, they work together, but very seldom do we sense any real friendship amongst them. These people either need or desire solitude, and are there for a reason.

And how about that cast? Fresh off creating



JC: Yes, it was refrigerated.

HH: I had heard that since it wasn't quite cold enough in the studio that the actors had to drink coffee to see their breath.

JC: That's right ... they had to tell it! But, it never got that cold. The original *Thing*—Howard Hawks' version—was shot in an icehouse. We went down into the icehouse it was shot in. Oh my god, I wouldn't work in there! I don't know how they did it. They were doing scenes in normal clothing, standing around a stove, and I remember the breath was coming out, and they hadn't put parkas on ... I thought ... oh man was it cold. So, we got a Hollywood refrigerated stage. We pushed out because of the actors. [laughs] Buncha Hollywood assholes!

HH: Can I quote you on that?

JC: Oh yes!

HH: Fantastic. I had also read that you went back to the book. The film was something that you loved, but you went back to the original novel to make your version of *The Thing*. Obviously, watching the original version, there are great differences between the two films.

JC: Thirty years difference is the main thing! What they had to work with back then, I mean, they had some advanced stuff in that movie. That bum ... when they set him on fire ... that is unbelievable for the time. That's a full bum. And, that just was not a whole lot. They did not have fast-F-stops back then. I mean, just incredible technical stuff they had to work with. But the audience in the 1980s wasn't going to buy it—that kind of a creature. I was very hesitant to go make this movie ... it wasn't something I was excited about. I thought, "I don't want to do this." The Hawk's version is beloved to me. I don't want to get in to fuck around with this movie. But the only way I could do it was to ignore that [Hawk's film], and go for the novella ... which

actually had that one great, gripping scene in it—the blood test scene. I knew I could do something with that, and that was the reason I wanted to make the film. The blood test!

HH: Speaking of the creature, you wanted to make it unlike anything else and it almost wasn't a "thing" at all. But what ended up being on screen in the early '80s was unlike anything we had ever seen—almost very Lovecraftian in a way. Do you think that audiences of the early '80s maybe weren't ready for that?

JC: Well, they saw a lot of things in that [scene] that weren't there. People were telling me they saw fetuses, and abortions, and stillbirths ... stuff like that. I am not kidding. They projected into what they were watching on the screen. But that is what we set out to do ... show them something that hadn't been seen and bring it into light. As opposed to the old cliché of keep it in the shadows—it'll be scarier. Well, not necessarily ... I mean, Jurassic Park, those dinosaurs come charging across that valley—you don't want to keep that in shadow! You want to see it! I believe that was the idea behind that. We had no idea, let me be clear with you, we had no idea what "the thing" looked like. It was not written in the script—it was all suggested. Nobody knew. Rob Bottin came up with this idea that it can look like anything because it imitates any life form that it has ever been in contact with. So, it can do all these crazy ass things in front of the camera. That's what he invented, and he would have done more, but time and money wouldn't allow it.

HH: To wrap this up, you now have a huge fan base for *The Thing*—the fanbase you should have had in the early '80s. So, what would you like to say to those fans?

JC: Absolutely, to my heart, flattered and delighted that people love *The Thing*. And, I am happy that they found it ... because they found it in home video. They didn't find it in the theaters. It just makes me feel great! It feels good. 🍷



the cult icon Snake Plissken in *Escape from New York* the year prior, Kurt Russell assumed the lead role of helicopter pilot MacReady. Screenwriter Lancaster described MacReady as "not the All-American hero." He is a loner there to collect a paycheck, not to make friends. But when the shit hits the fan, he steps up and takes control—maybe more out of self-preservation than anything, but none the less, he still does what he feels needs to be done. As Blair, one of the scientists in the camp, Wilford Brimley does an outstanding job (even without the mustache and oastmeat). He is the first to figure out the possible

outcome of this situation, knowing what fate awaits humanity should the creature reach the mainland and the rest of the world's population. Or ... has he already been taken over at that point and plotting his escape? One will never know.

The rest of the cast is filled out with talented character actors, such as Donald Moffat, Richard Dysart, Richard Masur, Charles Hallahan and T.K. Carter (usually known for comedic roles). As for Keith David, who plays lough guy Childs, *The Thing* represented his first substantial film role, leading to a long and respected screen career that included Carpenter's own *They Live* in 1988. All of these performers inhabit their characters so completely that when something happens to them, the audience completely empathizes. We feel their pain. We experience their fears and paranoia. And we share their sheer terror when they come face to face with the title character.

For all of his feature films up to this point, Carpenter had scored the soundtracks himself. His unique style of music fit his films perfectly, enhancing on-screen emotions and mood. But with *The Thing*, the scoring duties were delegated to someone else. Italian composer Ennio Morricone is probably best known for his work on tons of spaghetti westerns, such as *For a Few Dollars More*, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* and *Once Upon a Time in the West*. But the Italian maestro also scored his share of gothic horror films and giallos, such as *Nightmare Castle*, *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*, *The Cat o' Nine Tails* and *A Lizard in a Woman's Skin*, just to name a few. Intriguingly enough, Morricone composed and recorded the score without ever seeing a single piece of footage! Not only that, his musical themes and melodies sounded very similar to the style that Carpenter had thus far created. Carpenter inserted these different set pieces in the film where appropriate, then recorded a few "simple electronic pieces" to fill in some scenes. Even so, he maintains that this is very much Morricone's score.

Universal assigned the completed film a summer release date, despite Carpenter's emphatic desire that the studio delay putting the film out until the fall. He also requested that Universal change the name to the original story title, *Who Goes There?* The studio didn't take either suggestion, releasing *The Thing* in the States on June 25th, 1982 ... just two weeks after another film about an alien visitor had hit theaters: Steven Spielberg's *E.T.* *The Extra-Terrestrial*. After this heartwarming feel-good movie, audiences were not prepared for Carpenter's dark, doom-and-gloom, end-of-the-world, alien invasion flick. The reviews were harsh. David Denby of *New York Magazine* called the movie "more disgusting than frightening, and most of it is just boring." From the *Catholic Herald*, we got "particularly



homic combination of being both dull

and absolutely disgusting." Could it be that they couldn't see anything but the outrageous special effects? It had to be, because had they looked past all of the goo, slime and blood, they would have experienced an incredible film about paranoia, the loss of identity, and the human condition. Unfortunately, critics seemed preoccupied with condemning it for being "too gross," and having such a "downer conclusion." General audiences also expressed dissatisfaction at "an ending that didn't really end" (Funny, considering Carpenter had already done that to us once, back in 1978 with *Halloween*). It's true: we never know if the good guys won, or if the creature did. Nor were we meant to.

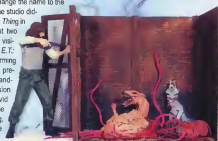
The box office failure of *The Thing* did not help Carpenter's career at all (it resulted in just under \$20 million theatrically—compared to *E.T.*'s \$300 million in 1982 box office receipts alone). In fact, thanks to the film's lackluster reception, Carpenter found himself fired from Universal's next project that he was slated to work on.

Even so, the film did register with its intended audience—the horror crowd. Thanks to the incredible effects, claustrophobic atmosphere and legitimately terrifying moments, it drew fans in and the positive word-of-mouth spread like wildfire. When it hit video a few years later, it gained an even bigger audience. Botin's groundbreaking efforts, the intelligent adaptation, marvelous acting, and Carpenter's overall vision have kept fans flocking to the film for nearly three decades—fans who understood what Carpenter and his crew were trying to do ... which is why it is now considered a classic.

This is also one of the rare '80s films where the special effects still hold up today. Sure, they could probably do wonders with CGI now, but this was all old-school, hands-on effects, where not only did you need to have the imagination and talent to come up with the look of the effects, but also the ability, determination, and raw courage to bring them to life on screen. It cannot be repeated often enough: Botin and his compatriots gave us a monster that audiences had never seen the likes of before. And 30 years later ... have not seen since.

The true test of any movie is how long it can survive. While the creatures in horror films may often be killed off, the pictures themselves—if they are good enough—live on and on. Whether we're talking about the original 1951 version or the 1982 remake, both *Things* have made an enormous mark on both the sci-fi and horror genres. No matter how they were initially received, the fact that they are still celebrated, discussed and watched all these years later, confirms their true genius.

One parting thought: If not for passionate horror fans (like the readers of this fine magazine), many films which were not huge financial successes in their day would remain undiscovered, lying "frozen in the ice," never to be enjoyed by generations to come. But, because we keep interests in these overlooked gems alive, fans can continue to discover them, experiencing the impact that they once had on us. So, to paraphrase our quirky reporter Scotty, keep watching those movies! ★



ARTIST SPOTLIGHT NORMAPHOBIA! THE HORROR OF NORMAN SAUNDERS

By David Saunders



Norman Blaine Saunders often described himself as a bastard. That was not entirely because he was born out of wedlock on January 1, 1907, in the northernmost wilderness of Minnesota. His 35-year-old father, Clare Edgar Saunders, was a married war veteran, who accidentally knocked up his wife's 18-year-old sister, Elvira Cox, who was one-quarter Iroquois Indian. A few years later his parents finally straightened things out and got married, so Norm's younger brother Duane was born legitimately.

In 1910, at the age of 3, Norm's right eye was severely burned in a household accident with a red-hot fireplace poker. The wound resulted in complete blindness. As the child became sick with infection his parents were not able to cope with the disaster. They gave him up for dead.

He was abandoned, feeble and delicious, on a passing train to Minneapolis. His head was completely swaddled in bandages and pinned to his coat was a note that begged any merciful stranger to deliver him to a charity hospital. He spent the next six months in a state ward, where his sight was eventually restored after several operations. After this experience Norm developed a powerful sense of rugged individualism, a cynical outlook on human nature, and a passionate lifelong habit of sketching detailed observations of everything around him as well.

After graduating high school, Norm received art training through a correspondence course from the Federal Schools Inc. of Minneapolis. Along with his diploma in 1927, Norm also received a scholarship to the Chicago Art Institute. He soon forfeited this honor in preference for an offer of a full-time job on the art staff at Fawcett Publications in Robbinsdale, Minnesota. Norm asked himself, "Why should I study to be an artist, when I can get paid to BE an artist." Norm worked there for six years and became one of the top artists on *Modern Mechanix* magazine, which featured outrageous inventions, such as boxing robots, giant bugs, King Kong, undersea peris, and the horror of futuristic weapons of war.

Norm moved to New York City in September 1934, where he studied night classes with Harvey Dunn at the Grand Central School of Art. Dunn was a protégé of the legendary Howard Pyle. He passed along the flame of Pyle's inspired challenge to illustrators to bring the same personal passion to their work as the great masters of art brought to their royal commissions and church murals.

In 1935, Saunders began to sell freelance cover illustrations to Fawcett's arch rival, Harry Donnell, for pulp mag-

azines *Saucy Stories*, *Spicy Mystery*, and *Saucy Movie Tales*. In order to avoid burning any bridges with Fawcett, these covers were signed with his little-known middle name "Blaine."

Saunders was a top pulp magazine cover artist by 1938. He painted over 400 pulp covers for almost every title and publisher in the industry during the pre-war period. He painted horrific covers for

Eerie, *Marvel Tales*, *Terror Tales*, *Black Book Detective*, *Complete Detective*, and *Spicy Detective*, which featured gruesome nightmares of corpses, dancing skeletons, macabre murderers, and invading hordes. His women were bound and tormented with guns, whips, knives, scythes, nooses, racks, drowning, and that same old red-hot fire poker from the personal nightmare of his own childhood tragedy. By 1940, he had moved into the slick magazine industry, with publications such as *Liberty*, *Elks*, *Click*, *True*, *Sports Afield*, and *Woman's Home Companion*, which paid far greater sums for freelance art.

Saunders was drafted by the Army during World War II and served one year in the military police guarding Nazi prisoners of war. By 1944 he was transferred to the Army Corps of Engineers and trained in camouflage. While on leave before overseas deployment, he married his girlfriend and favorite model, Marion McLean. In September of 1944, he was sent to paint gasoline storage tanks along the Burma Road in China for the duration.

Norm considered his time in China as his life's happiest and most artistically rewarding experience. Along with an insatiable interest in sketching the exotic sights of Far East Asia, Norm also produced several focused studies on particular facets of life in wartime China. He made detailed studies of the hat industry, the tobacco industry, recycled war materiel, prostitution, and opium. When the Japanese attacked the Burma Road to cut off this vital allied supply route they were counterattacked by Merrill's Marauders. Norm documented the horrors of war, the flaming ruins and scattered corpses of the battle aftermath. When Japanese saboteurs blew up a section of the gasoline pipeline, along with an entire mountainside, Norm inspected the terrain the following day, where he found the blacked corpse of a friend that had been on guard duty the night before. Norm painted a detailed watercolor of the scene. He was touched by the horror of his pal's death in a gigantic ball of fire, which erupted at the exact moment he had crouched down to take a shit, and left him forever charmed and frozen in that gnomish position.





An assortment of Pulp Magazines featuring cover artwork by Norm Saunders



Staff Sgt. Saunders returned to New York City in November 1945. Upon learning of his impending return, his wife committed suicide rather than confront him with the fact that she had shackled up with another man. War propaganda had made it clear that a wife's disloyalty to a soldier serving overseas by cheating with a draft dodger was an unforgivable act of near treason. Norm was completely distraught by this pointless tragedy. He dealt with his despair by spending a year on a drunken spree, bumming all over America. Finally his old army buddies got him to dry out and settle down, so he could resume his career as an artist. He got a new studio and found a new model, Elene Pollis, who he accidentally impregnated and then decided to marry in September, 1946. They moved to a Harlem townhouse and raised four children.

He continued to illustrate slick magazines, such as *Boy's Life*, *Adventure*, *Mechanix Illustrated*, as well as advertisements, packaging, calendars, and jigsaw puzzles.

Norman Saunders, as an individualist, firmly believed that his survival as a freelance artist depended on maintaining a recognizable style, and not on accommodating his client's demands. The mainstream maga-

zine industry changed after WWII as American manufacturing dominated the world market. Mass media was suddenly too important to permit the self-expressive creativity of freelance artists. According to Norm, "Slick magazine stuff became all corporate. It was suddenly the product of people who all wanted to throw in their own two cents, until it all watered down to nothing. It was no longer an artist putting out a picture with a single statement." He left the slick magazine industry and decided to work for smaller subculture publishers, where he would be free to continue to paint in his own style without the interference of marketing geniuses. He hoped some new slick magazine might come along someday that appreciated his style of work, and would offer him a lucrative annual contract for exclusive rights.

He returned to working for pulp magazines, where he was in constant demand for the remaining years of that industry. During this period, he added more than 400 pulp covers to his lifetime total of 867, which is the highest number of covers painted by any pulp artist. Once again his paintings flowed red with scenes of murder, mayhem, mystery and gore. All of his subsequent publishing clients were in the subculture world of paperbacks, comic books, men's adventure magazines, and trading cards.

His gruesome and sadistic paperback covers appeared on *Tonight She's Yours*, *Murder is Dangerous*, *Typed for a Corpse*, *Drawn to Evil*, *Mrs. Homicide*, *Murder by the Pack*, *Conan the Conqueror*, *All My Sins, Menasos*, *Crime Case Book*, *Killers*, *Terror*, *Too Hot for Hell*, and *Mysterious Travelers*.



He painted over 100 covers for pre-code comic books, such as *Crime Clinic*, *Unknown Worlds*, *Elery Queen*, *Cloak and Dagger*, *Strange Stories from Another World*, and *Worlds of Fear*. These included horrifying scenes of eyes popped out, skeletons, demons on a merry-go-round, and women in bondage tormented by that same damned red-hot poker! He even painted the Classic Illustrated comic of *Frankenstein*.

By 1955, Norm realized the golden age of illustrators was over and done. Mainstream American publishing would never again look for a successor to replace a pop celebrity like Norman Rockwell. Saunders felt cheated by fate but also strangely liberated. He stopped signing his work and he started to paint with a carefree abandon. As the men's magazines began to publish nude photos, Saunders realized that the only remaining use for an illustrator was his ability to fabricate make-believe worlds, because a painting presents a world of pure fantasy, while a photo is always chained to an earthbound reality. This idea freed his imagination to create sensational art for men's adventure magazines that broadly mocked Puritanical notions of good and evil. His paintings of demonic villains and imperiled damsels are as comically grotesque as burlesque theater. According to the artist, "I only got interested in art in the first place because I wanted to look at naked ladies!"

If you're into horror you might want to check out the set of bubble gum trading cards produced by Topps in 1951 called *Civil War News*. There is no point in describing them. Just check it out. The 1952 card set *Mars Attacks!* is even better. Norm painted all of the best images of these sinister glowering skeletal brained aliens for their worldwide rampage of mayhem. He even painted the iconic bloody lettering for *Mars Attacks!* Then in 1955, he made the *Battle cards*, which were banned in the UK. In 1956, the *Batman cards* were the biggest fad. Once again Norm painted the dynamic duo in dozens of desperate cliff-hanging scenes, while being tortured with assorted weapons, and even a red-hot poker! In 1967, Norm painted *Monster Valentines*, which features *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, mad scientists and werewolves, and various ghouls with

MARS ATTACKS



popped-out eyeballs. There are even horrifying scenes among Norm's sensationally popular *Wacky Packages*, such as G.I. Toe, Creep Toothpaste, Stylax Living Gloves, Band-Aches, Kentucky Fried Fingers, Ghoul Humor, Feetena, and Anse Shaving Lotion.

He lived long enough to enjoy the phenomenon of his rediscovery by the younger generation, who celebrated him as a legendary creator of many of the coolest iconic images of American popular culture horror.

He retired to his wife's hometown: Columbus, Nebraska, where Norman Saunders died of emphysema at the age of 82 on March 7, 1989.

Some of his last conversations were about a dream of creating a lavish coffee table art book that gathered together all of the finest examples of his life's work. Norm had accomplished so much in so many different fields that the true scope of his artistic achievement can only be appreciated in the expansive format of

a retrospective book. He was totally unpretentious and shockingly irreverent, so he was embarrassed to entertain such a far-off dream of grandiose pride. When plans for this massive book seemed like an impractical pipe dream, Norm would burst these soap bubbles and restore level-headed reasoning with his fundamental cynicism, "Why should we do a book on my work? For the glory of posterity? That's nuts! What will I care about posterity after I'm dead and gone! Posterity can go fuck itself!"

For more information on Norm Saunders, please visit: www.theillustratedpress.com

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HORROR'S HALLOWED GROUNDS

BY SEAN CLARK

THE TERMINATOR

The idea for *The Terminator* came to James Cameron in a dream during post-production on *Piranha II: The Spawning* in Rome, Italy. Well, at least something good came out of his experience on that film.

Released on October 26, 1984, with a budget of \$6.5 million, this little independent film became one of the highest-grossing films of its time, taking in over \$78 million at the box office alone. Most of the film was shot in and around the Los Angeles, California area.

The first location is the most recognizable in the film. It's the world famous Griffith Observatory located in the Hollywood Hills, very near the iconic

Hollywood sign. Located at 2800 East Observatory Road in Los Angeles. This is where the Terminator first appears in the film. The portal area is just to the lower left of the observatory.

As you can see in the photo there has been an alteration made to the building – a new stairway has been added.



The Terminator walks to the edge and looks out over the city of Hollywood.



The scene then cuts to the front of the observatory as the Terminator walks towards the parking lot where the punks are hanging out by the telescope.

There used to be an area here with a covering, but that has since been removed. The telescope has also gone, but you can see the circle on the ground in the pavement where it once stood.

Next, we are introduced to the waitress who is ready to save mankind on her scooter, Sarah Connor. She is driving down Fremont Avenue towards Mission Street only two blocks from the



tamed Myers house of John Carpenter's 1978 classic, *Halloween*.

Sarah locks up her scooter and heads into her place of employment known in the film as Big Jiff's.

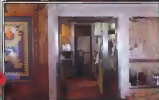




In reality, it is a Carrows Restaurant.

Carrows is located at 815 Fremont Avenue in South Pasadena, California. The interior, also used in the film, has been slightly remodeled here and there.

The Terminator needs to stock up on some weapons, so he heads over to the Alamo Sports Shop, which has a surprisingly large selection of



firearms

Today it is the K.L. Auto Center and is located at 14329 Victory Boulevard in Van Nuys. The interior of this building was utilized as well.

The Terminator attempts to visit Sarah Connor at her apartment, located at 420 South La Fayette Park



Place in Los Angeles. The building and entrance has barely changed since 1984.

Reese follows Sarah Connor to the fictitious club Tech Noir. Cameron came up with the name of the club because it meant the dark side of technology and because of his love of film noir.



Today the storefront is the home of the New Box Corp. located at 720 South Hill Street in downtown Los Angeles.

Downtown Los Angeles is where a lot of the action takes place in the film. This is where Reese first appears and escapes from the police. Most of the car chases through the city and alleyways were shot in the area between 2nd and 7th Streets and Broadway. Some of the famous tunnels, like the 2nd Street tunnel and the underground between Hill Street and Figueroa Avenue, were also used.



The parking structure where the shootout takes place is at the Department of Water and Power at 111 North Hope Street in Los Angeles.

After a long night of being chased by the Terminator and police interrogation, Reese and Sarah get some much needed rest (and sex) at the Tiki Motel.

The Tiki Motel is actually the real name of the motel located at 7301 Santa Fe Avenue in Huntington Park. I wouldn't recommend visiting this area at night because in the daytime it was bad enough. To call this motel a shit hole would be an insult to shit holes. First off, the guy working in the



front office did not speak a word of English and had no idea what I was trying to tell him. I wanted to get inside Room #9 to take interior pictures. He kept talking me to different rooms until finally he understood. I offered him \$20 just to go in and take photos. I don't think he had any clue what I wanted, but \$20 was probably the hourly rate anyway. Hourly rates are very common among areas that are high in



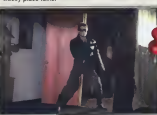
prostitution. In fact, while we were looking for the motel, I pointed out (to my friend who accompanied me on this photo shoot) a girl who I was pretty sure was a hooker standing on the street just a few blocks before we found the place.

When I entered Room #9, although it was very similar to the film, something was off about it. The rear window was slightly different and the entrance to the bathroom was to the left of the toilet and not directly in front of it like in the film. However, I took my photos anyway.

It wasn't until I got home and did some more digging that I discovered that the interior of the motel room was actually a set, as you can see in the following behind-the-scenes photo.

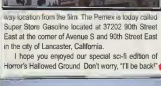
In the film, you will notice that the characters enter and exit the room, but from the inside you never see anything outside of the room.

After we were finished taking photos, my friend Anthony and I saw a car pull up and a guy get out to get a room. And guess who got out of the car after him? The "alleged" hooker I pointed out earlier. It's a classy place folks!




The interior of the final confrontation between the Endoskeleton Terminator, Reese and Sarah takes place inside an industrial building located at 13010 East Temple Avenue in the City of Industry. I went there and took a picture of the building, but didn't get inside where the actual filming took place.

At the end of the film, we see a pregnant Sarah Connor pull into the Pemex gas station that we are supposed to believe is in Mexico. This is where the young boy takes a Polaroid of Sarah and shakes her down for four bucks. This is by far the most out of the



way location from the film. The Pemex is today called Super Store Gasoline located at 37202 90th Street East at the corner of Avenue S and 90th Street East in the city of Lancaster, California.

I hope you enjoyed our special sci-fi edition of Horror's Hallowed Ground. Don't worry, "I'll be back!"



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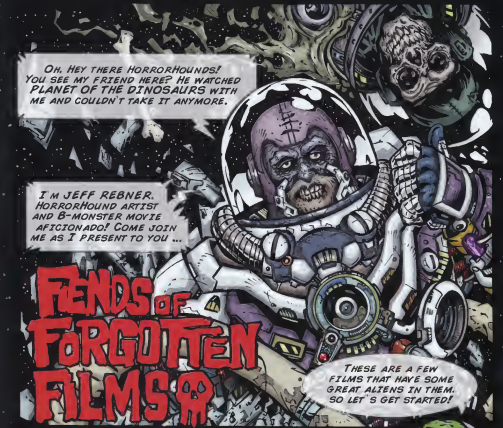
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OH, HEY THERE HORRORHOUNDS!
YOU SEE MY FRIEND HERE? HE WATCHED
PLANET OF THE DINOSAURS WITH
ME AND COULDN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE.

I'M JEFF REBNER,
HORRORHOUND ARTIST
AND B-MONSTER MOVIE
AFICIONADO! COME JOIN
ME AS I PRESENT TO YOU ...

FRIENDS OF FORGOTTEN FILMS

THESE ARE A FEW
FILMS THAT HAVE SOME
GREAT ALIENS IN THEM.
SO LET'S GET STARTED!

NIGHTBEAST



AN ALIEN WITH A
GUN ... IT CAN'T GET
ANY BETTER THAN THAT! THIS
EARLY-'80S FILM WAS DIRECTED BY THE
LATE DON DOHLER. CHECK OUT ANOTHER
FAVORITE OF MINE FROM HIM CALLED
THE ALIEN FACTOR!

HERE ARE A FEW MORE
MONSTER MOVIES THAT I
DARE YOU TO WATCH!

The Green Slime



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A GOOD '60S-STYLE SCI-FI
MOVIE, WITH ONE OF THE
BEST THEME SONGS EVER!



THE CRAWLING EYE

ALSO KNOWN AS "THE
TROLLENBERG TERROR,"
THIS SLOW-PACED
THRILLER FEATURES
A LOVECRAFTIAN-TYPE
LOOK THAT I
ABSOLUTELY LOVE!



THE DEADLY SPAWN

HERE IS ANOTHER
CREATURE; LIKE
NIGHTBEAST, CONJURED
UP BY AN UNSUNG HERO
OF MINE - FX CREATOR
JOHN DODS! NOT MUCH
TO SAY ABOUT THIS FLICK
OTHER THAN WAITING
FOR THIS MONSTROCITY
TO EMERGE!

SO, THERE YOU HAVE IT KIDDIES!
AND BEWARE! FOR THESE FILMS ARE
NOT FOR THE FAINT OF HEART!
NOR ARE THEY FOR THOSE WITH SHORT
ATTENTION SPANS! SO VIEW THEM
AT YOUR OWN RISK, AND REMEMBER
TO WATCH THE SKIES!



SLASH & DINE

Without a doubt, *The Thing* is one of the best films ever. It's near perfect. John Carpenter's best work (if you ask us, anyway), and is a film you can watch over and over again. When we were told this issue was all about sci-fi, we knew we wanted to create some recipes inspired by *The Thing* and jumped right into the kitchen. Now, while the thought of shape-shifting aliens living among us in the middle of nowhere is terrifying, these dishes are nothing short of delicious. Here at Slash & Dine, we want to make your movie viewing experience even better by pairing great films with great food. For those of you who don't cook or bake too often, trust us: these recipes are easy to follow and hard to screw up. And for those with a little more culinary talent, invite your friends over and make it a party. ♦

Kurt Brussel Sprout Sandwich

Ingredients:

4 slices Swiss bread / 8-10 brussel sprouts
6 turkey slices / 4 swiss cheese slices
olive oil / butter / salt and pepper

Directions:

Shred brussel sprouts in food processor. Sauté in olive oil for 4-5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

Butter one side of each slice of bread. Layer turkey slices, shredded brussel sprouts, and cheese on 2 slices of bread, with butter on outside. Top with remaining slices of bread. Grill sandwiches in frying pan over medium heat for 3-4 minutes on each side, until bread is golden brown and cheese is melted. Makes 2 sandwiches.

Baked Antarctica

Ingredients:

1 quart ice cream, softened (we used red velvet)
8x8 pan of brownies (store bought or your favorite recipe)
2 egg whites / 3 Tbsp sugar / 2 Tbsp brandy

Directions:

Line a mixing bowl with foil or waxed paper. Use a medium-size bowl that when flipped over fits on top of the brownies. Spread the ice cream in the bowl and cover with more foil. Freeze at least 8 hours. Remove ice cream from freezer. Unmold and place ice cream on top of brownies. Trim brownies to fit ice cream. They don't need to be perfect since they will be covered. Put ice cream covered brownies in freezer and prepare meringue.

Continued ...

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. In a mixing bowl, whip egg whites and sugar until peaks form. Remove ice cream from freezer and cover with egg white mixture. Bake in oven for 4-5 minutes until lightly browned. Remove from oven and sprinkle with brandy. Light on fire. Let fire burn out and serve immediately.

** Always use caution when lighting food on fire! Make sure there is no alcohol on your hands or the table near where you are lighting the fire. Use a lighter with a long nozzle.

Cheatin' Bitch drink

Ingredients:

8 ounces Sweetened iced tea
4 ounces J&B scotch whiskey

Directions:

Mix tea and whiskey. Pour over ice. Serves 2



For more recipes & great stuff visit our Slash & Dine column at www.slashdine.com -Sandra & Megan



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THE ASSUARY



This past July, the biggest show of the summer was unleashed in Louisville, Kentucky—Fright Night Film Fest. Now with a mix of pop culture (thanks to their FandomFest), Fright Night was packed with celebrities ranging from John Carpenter, Linda Blair and Eddie Furlong to Henry Winkler and a full *Revenge of the Nerds* reunion. HorrorHound was especially excited about the *Dark Night of the Scarecrow* reunion featuring first-time guests Larry Drake and Tonya Crowe. Film screenings took place all weekend long, including *Cross* (Michael Clarke Duncan, Vinnie Jones) and *The Victim* (in which director Michael Biehn was on hand to present). Based on teasers heard about next year's massive event (including a move to a convention center), fans should make plans for next summer's "FNFF."

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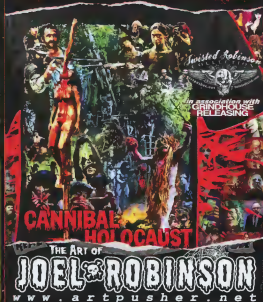
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WHO IS THE UNIVERSE'S

DEADLIEST ALIEN?



Alien

While this organism is alien, the primal instincts and bloody nature of the Aliens can't be denied.



Species

Sure, the Klowns have the numbers, but how can they defeat a monster whose blood and saliva are pure acid?



Bad Taste



Killer Klowns

While both alien species enjoy the taste of humans, the Klowns have more impressive weapons.



They Live

The Gritters don't give how slowly the aliens from They Live are. "Mark is heavy." Gritters say.



Gritters

Sure, the Gritters seem to only care about eating flesh, meat. But the Blob is just petty about what it absorbs. And it will have no problem absorbing critters.



The Thing



The Blob

Look, the Blob isn't how it looks. However, the Blob will devour anything it is not.



Grend. Grend only be able to put together an army of zombies, but imagine the zombie hybrid that result from an Alien infection?



It has impressive mind-controlling capabilities and can resist the help needed to destroy him. "Scary."



IT



Deadly Gamm

Grend Grend and "if" have something in common — grand control. But the Slither's "buddle" has more tricks up his sleeve.



Slither



Ferner Widen

The alien stage from space is a lot more menacing than the alien-looking girl from "Ferner Widen."



Mars Attacks

The Klowns' "Mars Attacks" are small but fast. The "Mars Attacks" are small but fast.



Metalans

Both are fighters from outer space with impressive weapons and a thirst for blood. However, the Metalans can't tell what they can't see!



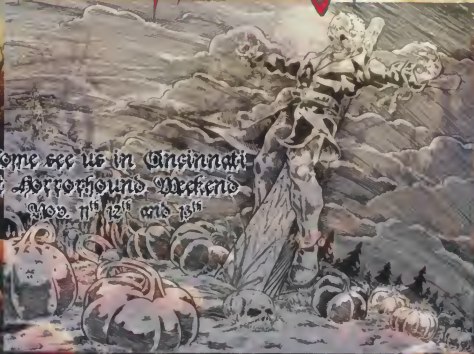
Bl The Terror



Predator



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FANTASY COLLECTOR'S SPOTLIGHTS



FANTASY Ben Timms

Our first Collector's Spotlight is on Ben Timms from South Carolina! Ben says "I am 45 years old and have been collecting horror books, comics, magazines and memorabilia since I was a child. Because of my passion, I had to have a room built to house all of my treasures."



FANTASY Randy Allen

Our second Collector's Spotlight comes from a Cincinnati-area local named Randy Allen. Randy commented, "I wanted to send you a few pics of my collection to possibly have featured in the magazine." No problem! Readers can email photos to mail@horrorhound.com to have their collections spotlighted in a future HorrorHound!



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THEY CAME FROM THE KRYPT!

by Alex Riddle

These days, pretty much anybody with a cheap digital camera can make a movie. Granted, for every good one, there are thousands that are barely watchable. But before the age of iMovie, it took serious dedication to fulfill your cinematic dreams. If you really were serious about making movies, then you needed to move to Hollywood ... or Baltimore. In keeping with this issue's sci-fi theme, we decided to spotlight a couple of low-budget films made in the late '70s and early '80s by a young filmmaker from "Charm City," and no, it's not John Waters. Though Don Dohler's name is largely familiar only to fans of obscure cult films, his passion and enthusiasm are deserving of attention. The reason? The lesser qualities of the performances, scripts, or even the completed films themselves are more than compensated for with a sense of good old-fashioned monster movie fun. Jump in the Kryptmobile as we journey into Baltimore's not-so-distant past to learn more about this underrated filmmaker.



Born in 1946, Dohler had always been fascinated by movies. Entranced by a reissue of the original King Kong as a child, the desire to learn how this gigantic gorilla came to life on the screen kickstarted his passion for filmmaking. With an 8mm movie camera (a gift from his mom), he launched his self-taught career in celluloid, discovering different camera tricks and techniques along the way. After joining an amateur film society and completing a few short subjects, he hit upon the idea of creating a magazine that could help other struggling filmmakers learn different elements of the trade. In 1972, Cinemagic was born, inspiring and teaching

fans like Tom Sullivan (who would go on to create the effects for *The Evil Dead*). Dohler oversaw the magazine until 1979 when he sold the name to Starlog, who continued the publication into the late '80s. Not only did Cinemagic help its creator learn about special movie effects, but it also formed plenty of friendships with others trying to get their foot in the door of the film business.

On his 30th birthday, Dohler's place of work was robbed by three men holding shotguns. This near-fatal experience made him realize

that if he had any real intentions of making a movie, he had to do it now, since any day could be his last. Utilizing connections formed while running Cinemagic, Dohler and friends set out to create their first movie. The result would be an all-out monster jamboree.

The *Alien Factor* (1978) focuses on a spaceship, loaded down with specimens from around the universe, which crashes in the small Baltimore suburb of Perry Hill, Maryland. Three of these captive aliens escape and begin running around town. Between the police, townspeople, and a mysterious scientist from the planetarium, the locals try to locate and destroy the aliens before any more members of their little community are killed.

The acting here is about as amateur as you can get, with only a couple of "real" actors ... and it shows. I personally find this aspect, along with the goofy dialogue half, part of the movie's charm. You can tell everyone's heart is 100 percent behind what they're trying to accomplish. But the real highlights of *Alien Factor* are the intergalactic creatures. The fact that these resourceful, cash-strapped filmmakers came up with some pretty original designs and created these stellar scenes with very little money—but plenty of imagination—should inspire any wannabe filmmaker. Because witnessing an eight-foot tall

practical creature (or a superimposed stop-motion monster) battling one of the human characters is enough to bring out the inner child in any monster movie fan ... all the more impressive considering the entire film was made on a budget of around \$5,000. Successfully sold to TV and well received by viewers, Dohler's debut earned quite a bit of local notoriety for the young auteur.

Our second Dohler feature, *Nightbeast* (1982), should have been his second feature. But after a much-troubled production, he was forced to shelve it and begin another, more financially viable project.

However, once money began coming in from *Alien Factor*, he was able to go

back and start afresh. The story, about an alien that crash lands in a small Eastern town, could be considered a reworking of the first film, since several actors also return to the fray, even playing the same characters! Nonetheless,

Nightbeast wielded a substantially bigger budget (nearly \$40,000), so he was able to make things look a little more professional.

Dohler knew that if he wanted to sell his feature, especially to the foreign markets, it would require a few elements he wasn't too fond of. He was instructed to include the 'S B's'—A Blonde's Bare Breast Bathed in Blood," so he added some nudity and a totally gratuitous "love scene." And while the on-screen breasts weren't bathed in blood, there was quite a bit of bloodshed in the rest of the movie—eight people died within the first 15 minutes—with decapitations, disembowelings and more. (Hey, when you have a creature with a mouthful of teeth and big claws, the red stuff is going to fly.) Speaking of which, the "Beast" was created by John Dods, who went on to create one of our all-time favorite alien monsters the following year, *The Deadly Spawn*. Also, a young musician named Jeffrey Abrams sent Dohler some music to use for the film. Nowadays, most people know him as J.J. Abrams, creator of *Lost*, *Fringe*, *Cloverfield*, and a few other things.

Though he continued to serve as producer, cinematographer and other behind-the-scenes positions throughout his career, Dohler only directed seven features before passing away in 2006. None of these films were huge blockbusters but all are fun and entertaining, made with a charm and passion for the genre, which is all you can ask for in a movie. So if you're looking for a little small-town low-budget fun, take a little drive west, head up to Baltimore City, and Discover the Horror!



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NEXT ISSUE

Are you sick and tired of horror remakes? In the next issue of *HorrorHound*, we further challenge your tolerance for Hollywood's age-old practice of making what was once scary – new again (although, usually not scary again). From the early days of cinema, Hollywood has tried to one-up their best efforts, whether it be *The Phantom of the Opera* or *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, the original scene-makers have always enjoyed re-envisioning – just ask Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde – who have “enjoyed” over 100 film adaptations of their story alone!

Next issue we take a look at the history of horror remakes and grade each title – the good, the bad and the ugly! – with major emphasis on the '80s remake boom (*The Blob*, *Invaders from Mars*, *Cat People*, *The Fly*), the late '90s (*Village of the Damned*, *Psycho*, *The House on Haunted Hill*), the Asian invasion (*Ring*, *The Grudge*, *Dark Waters*, *The Eye*) and the current-day glut (*Amityville Horror*, *Black Christmas*, *Fright Night*). ... Which remakes are superior to the original, and which ones should viewers ignore in lieu of their predecessors?

Many of our regular features will revolve around remakes as well, including a look back at the locations of Rob Zombie's *Halloween* (Horror's Hallowed Grounds) and a historical retrospective on *The Fly* film series (including all three original films from the '50s and '60s). Video Invasion, Kitey's Krypt, Toy News, DVD/Blu-ray and Movie News will all be in our next issue – plus a bonus peek at the multitude of titles promoted over the five-day San Diego Comic-Con event held this past July (including *Dark Shadows*, *The Raven*, *Underworld: Awakening* and *Twist*) – all available in two months! ♦



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September 16 thru 19th, 2011
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www.monstermania.net
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Scarefest Horror & Paranormal

September 23 thru 25th, 2011
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www.thescarefest.com
(Featuring Elvira, Lance Henriksen, Michael Biehn and more!)

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September 24th, 2011
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www.sachorror.com
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HORRORHOUND HALL OF FAME PREDATOR SCHWARZENEGGER

By the late 1980s, movie maniacs had a diverse offering of fare to sink their teeth into. The horror genre was still permeated with vampires, werewolves and slashers, but studios knew fans craved fresh scares. Cinemagoers were more experienced now, thanks to a seemingly endless availability of films, both in theaters and on home video. Sci-fi and horror fans had seen all manner of both classic and modern monsters, killer robots and aliens. But the year 1987 delivered something new and exciting, with the ultimate crossover pitting the biggest action star of the decade against a dreadlocked humanoid threat from outer space.

In a bold move, sibling screenwriters John and Jim Thomas slipped a script under a studio executive's door, hoping their idea was strong enough to ignite a spark. Originally written based on a joke that Sylvester Stallone's Rocky Balboa would need to fight an alien creature in the next Rocky film, the writing duo delivered a sensuously fresh take on the sci-fi genre that encompassed everything from over-the-top action sequences to tense and atmospheric horror. The Thomas brothers' script for *Predator* (initially titled *Hunter*) was picked up by 20th Century Fox in 1985, then turned over to producer Joel Silver who appeared to be the right choice to convert a vintage science-fiction monster movie into a big-budget blockbuster. Silver enlisted his former boss Lawrence Gordon as co-producer, while directing duties fell to relative rookie John McTiernan, who at that point had only helmed the cult horror item *Nomads* (though *Die Hard* and *The Hunt for Red October*, among others, were in his not-too-distant future).

However, once larger-than-life action star Arnold Schwarzenegger was cast as Major Dutch Schaefer, the game changed radically. The story followed a group of elite commandos; therefore, the casting of the remaining team members was very important since they needed to stand as equals to Schwarzenegger. While not an easy task for Silver, Gordon and co-producer John Davis, who managed to put together a formidable ensemble. Bill Duke, who had appeared with Arnold in 1985's *Commando*, was cast as Mac Eliot while former NFL star-turned-actor Carl Weathers played Major George Dillon. Ex-wrestler Jesse Ventura landed his first film role as the foul-mouthed Blain Cooper, armed with a modified M134 minigun called "Ol' Painless" (the first in cinematic history to rattle off about 3,000 to 5,000 rounds a minute). Sonny Landham plays Billy Sole, a Native American tracker and the unspoken spiritual leader of the group. Richard Chaves assumed the part of translator Jorge "Poncho" Ramirez, while writer Shane Black was cast as Rick Hawkins for light comic relief (as well as being on the set for daily script revisions). Veteran actor R.G. Armstrong rounded out the cast, with Elpidia Carrillo's "Anna" the film's only female character.

Dutch and his team are dispatched to a Central American jungle to assist Dillon on a rescue mission. The team searches for potential survivors of a downed

by Aaron Crowell

helicopter as they witness the execution of a hostage in a guerrilla camp. This leads to one of, if not the best, action sequence in film history. The plan was simple: to create the most fantastic action sequence to outdo everything that had come before it. As the team springs into action — bullets, bodies and blood decorate the screen. We see what Ol' Painless can do — ditto the team's expert skills as they do what they do best. Thanks to McTiernan's clever camera work, we do not witness the action from afar but are given wonderful POV shots in the thick of the action. After the smoke clears, Anna is taken captive as Dutch discovers that the team has been double-crossed and sent on their mission under false pretenses. Unfortunately, deception turns out to be the least of their worries as the group is systematically hunted down by an intelligent, ruthless, chameleon-like adversary.

Once principal photography commenced in April, 1986, the filmmakers faced many challenges on *Predator*, the largest two being an insufficient budget of \$15 million (which dried up after two thirds of shooting), and a poor monster suit. Since the *Predator*'s scenes were not scheduled until the end, the original creature suit's arrival to the set was later as well. Much to the creative team's chagrin, the suit looked more like a bug with a turtle head than a bloodthirsty alien. Furthering the team's disappointment in the suit, martial arts star Jess-Claude Van Damme — the Muscles from Brussels, who was cast to be the man wearing the suit with the hope that his agility

would make the creature stealthy and sleeker physically, kept passing out due to the extreme heat inside the costume.

This (among other reasons) led to a new actor being cast for the role. Enter 7-foot-2-inch actor Kevin Peter Hall, who had just finished work on *Harry and the Hendersons* (playing the lovable titular Sasquatch). McTiernan, in turn, sought out FX artist extraordinaire Stan Winston to provide a better creature design and suit for the actor. While traveling to Fox studios on a plane with friend and collaborator James Cameron, Winston began working on sketches for the new *Predator*. (Cameron apparently revealed that he had always wanted to see a creature with mandibles — the rest is history.) The remaining funds to complete the film were quickly provided following a studio screening of the already completed footage — thanks to the amazing chemistry between the writers, director and Winston, the film was back on track and better than ever.

What ultimately makes *Predator* such an extraordinary cinematic accomplishment is its flawless sharp left turn from an exciting action film to electrifying monster movie within a classic sci-fi framework. (Not to mention the shocking surprise of seeing the heretofore invincible Schwarzenegger manhandled in such brutal fashion.) The film proved an enormous success for all involved (raking in a near-\$100 million at the box office), almost instantly establishing itself as a modern-day classic, spawning sequels, spin-offs, comic books, toys and legions of fans. Welcome to the HorrorHound Hall of Fame, you ugly mother*****



Skyline (2010): The actual filming on *Skyline* cost a reported \$500 thousand. More shocking? The digital effects (including monster animations) cost a reported \$10 million!

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